16674

A DISCOURSE OF Religious Assemblies:

Wherein the

NATURE and NECESSITY OF

Divine Worship

IS

Explain'd and Asserted,

AGAINST

Negligence & Prophaneness,

For the Use of the Members of the

Church of *England.*

By *GEORGE BURGHOPE*, Rector of *Little-Gaddesden* in *Hertford-shire*, and Chaplain to the Right Honourable the Earl of *Bridgewater.*

LONDON, 1697.

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TO THE

Moſt Accompliſh'd

AND

Truly Noble LADY,

THE

Right Honourable

JANE,

Counteſs of *Bridgewater*, &c.

(A great Example of Piety and every Vertue)

Theſe Papers are Humbly Dedicated by Her moſt Humble and Obedient Servant and Chaplain,

G. Burghope.

TO THE

HONOURABLE

Charles Leigh,

OF

LEIGHTON, Esq;

SIR,

WE live in an Age wherein we may find great numbers of Men calling themselves Christians and *Protestants*, who yet are, in respect

of their Duty to Man, not better, and in reſpect of that to *God* far worſe than *Pagans* and *Heathens*. Theſe laſt were ſo careful not to miſs a God, that they deified his Gifts and his Creatures, and choſe rather to be Idolaters than *Atheiſts*. They built Temples and Houſes of Divine Worſhip at Immenſe Charges; and Endowed and Frequented them often. They approach'd their Gods with an awful Fear, and rever'd even the Places where the Deity was thought to Dwell. They were zealous even to Superſtition and Cruelty, and the Worſhip of their Gods

was

was always Chargeable and Pompous, and ſometimes Painful, and even fatal to them and their Children. Thus they were of old; and they continue much the ſame in thoſe places where the Light of the Goſpel hath not yet chas'd away the Darkneſs of Gentiliſm. But we have a ſort of Men amongſt us, who (as tho' ſtruck Blind by continual Light) among all the reiterated Precepts of Chriſtianity, are quite Ignorant of God, and own him no further, than the cuſtomary calling on him in any danger or Calamity. Nature or Cuſtom dictates to them an *O God*, not Reaſon;

and they never trouble themſelves with any Devout and Thoughtful Addreſs to him. They are unconcern'd in all the parts of the Worſhip of God: They can hear the Call to Church, and ſee others go, and yet ſtay at Home without any Self-reflections. 'Tis true, ſometimes Diverſion, Pleaſure, or Worldly buſineſs brings them thither, but then they look upon the Service as Foreign to them, and paſs over the ſeveral parts of it, without reſpect to God to whom it ſhou'd be directed, whether it be that of the Body or Mind. Thus they are always abſent while

pre-

preſent, and never further from God, than when they are in his Houſe.

Theſe are Scandals to that excellent Church of which they are ſuppos'd to be Members, and are uſually but falſly objected to her by thoſe that diſſent from her; I ſay falſly, For tho' they were Baptized into the Faith of Chriſt, and into her Communion in their Infancy, yet they have ſince depriv'd themſelves of the benefits of their Baptiſm, and deſerted that Communion by refuſing to participate in the other Sacrament. They have caſt off all Obedience, and ſo effectually have Excommuni-

cated

cated themſelves, tho' that Sentence be not formally Pronounc'd againſt them. And thus having broken down the Pale, and having tranſgreſs'd their due Limits, 'tis no wonder if (like *Out-lying Deer*) they are liable to the Snares of every cunning *Hunter*. My meaning is, That the *Diſſenters* of all ſorts (if they can but once bring them to any Senſe in Religion) make a Prey of them, and ſo much the eaſier for their Ignorance and Indifferency. For never underſtanding the Principles that they profeſs, they are eaſily ſeduc'd by any pretences; and having long ſhut

their Eyes againſt all Light, they cannot diſtinguiſh the true Nature of things, when they open them; ſeldom or never any Man leaves the *Church*, that throughly underſtands its Doctrine, Diſcipline and Worſhip; but when an Ignorant and Unconcern'd Wretch is once awakened, he lies open to all Inſinuations. He underſtands neither of the Extremes, and cannot judge of the Truth, either of Calumny or Commendations. Such a Man once rais'd from his *Lethargy*, drives furiouſly, makes a Zealot, and (like green Wood well fired) burns with more im-

impetuosity. He is usually Bold, Loud, and Talkative; has as little Modesty as Learning, and his Ignorance makes him Impudent: But if he escapes the Snares of these Men, too commonly he fixes his Thoughts on the World, continues his insensibility, and at last dies as he hath liv'd, a *Nominal Christian* only.

These are the Men, that I wou'd awaken into sober thoughtfulness by this Discourse, by shewing them the Nature of our Religious Assemblies, and the necessity of the Divine Worship therein exhibited. That it is not indifferent (as many take it) or dispensa-

diſpenſable with upon any account, but that of an equivalent. That our deareſt Pleaſures and Profits may not yet be preferr'd to it; but that it ought to ſuperſede all other Acts but thoſe that are equally neceſſary and indiſpenſable, I mean, only Works of Mercy to others, and Works of Neceſſity (which are likewiſe Works of Mercy) to our ſelves; becauſe concerning theſe, our *Lord* has determin'd the Point out of the Prophet *Hoſea*, and hath thereby given us a double Authority of the Old Teſtament and the New. *Mat.* 9. 13. *I will have Mercy and not Sacrifice.*

crifice. And finally, that the Carnal *Politicians* (that excuſe themſelves from the Worſhip of God, for either Gain or Diverſion) are much out, if *by gaining the whole World they ſhou'd endanger their Immortal Souls.* And if this Point was but once gain'd, ſo as to bring them to Church out of Conſcience towards God, it wou'd be eaſier to inſtruct them in the right uſe of Divine Worſhip, and render it Beneficial. And this particularly in *Prayer, Hearing* and *Communicating*, which are the three great Duties of our Religious Aſſemblies, which I have endeavoured to do in oppoſition

to

to Curioſity or Prophaneneſs.

That I have preſum'd to preſent *theſe Thoughts* to you alſo in Print, is, becauſe you have encourag'd them both by Word and Practice. You live over all the Rules that I have laid down and reduce them to Exerciſe. The whole is but a Comment on your Life, and you teach by your daily Converſation, what I do by Precept. So that this is but a fair Copy drawn from your Original, and cou'd all Men ſee and conſider your courſe of Piety, there wou'd need no other Directions but that of our Saviour's, *go and do likewiſe.* Your

Your frequent Attendance in the Houſe of God, and your regular Zeal, Reverence and Devotion there gives you a Right to Thoughts on this Subject. You have Inſtituted a Courſe of *daily Publick Prayers* in the place where you live, that thoſe that will come thither, may take part with you; for whoſe Benefit alſo you have taken care to have them continued as long as the World laſts. And thus thoſe that will Worſhip God may, by theſe means, find opportunity to do it, when you are gone to your Reſt; and thither this good Work, amongſt many others, will

will follow you. This is not the Voice of Flattery, but of Truth and Juſtice, and all that know you muſt teſtifie the ſame with me. And therefore (after that moſt *Excellent* and *Exemplary Lady*, to whom deſervedly I owe all Duty and Obſervance, and to whoſe *Noble Lord* you have the Honour to be Related) I have choſen you to *Patronize* what you daily Practiſe.

And therefore (*much Honored Sir*) let me not be thought injurious to you, if my conſtant Prayers are, that God wou'd deferr your Heaven and Happineſs, at leaſt, for

ſome years, and puniſh you with a long Life; that you may continue to be an Example of Primitive Piety; that Men, ſeeing your Good Works, may not only give Glory to God for his Gifts in you, but may be Encourag'd to Imitation, by thoſe Temporal Bleſſings which they ſhall obſerve deſcend upon you, till you be taken hence into a Participation of thoſe that be Eternal. Permit this to be the daily Prayer of

Your moſt Obliged
and Obedient Servant,

April the 10th 1697. *George Burghope.*

The

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ERRA.

ERRATA.

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THE INTRODUCTION.

1. I Am to ſpeak of the Worſhip of the Deity, the great Duty of Man, and the end of his Creation. The work of Heaven before the Formation of this groſs ſenſible World; our Chief and Original Service here, and the buſineſs of Eternity hereafter. Before the Foundations of this Earth were laid, the *New-made Sons* of God (the Angels) fill'd their Heaven with their Harmony, and ſhouted together for joy in their Songs of Praiſe. Thus did and do the Cœleſtial Choir ever ſince; and when Time ſhall have an end, and the whole Race of Mortals ſhall be extinct, the beautified Souls of Saints and Martyrs ſhall joyn their Chorus, and thus Sing and Praiſe their Maker for ever more.

2. This was the chief end of the Creation of the *Rational World.* God cou'd have no other deſign in producing Intelligent Beings, but that of Commuuicating his Greatneſs and Goodneſs to thoſe that he had introduc'd on the Stage of Nature. That Men (as well as Angels) might *Praiſe the Lord for his Goodneſs, and declare the Wonders that*

he doth for the Children of Men. 'Tis very obſervable that the four Quarters of the World, Eaſt, Weſt, North and South, have their Names in the Original from *Adam*'s uſual poſture of Devotion. *Kedem* which is the *Eaſt*, ſignifies the Face, or that which is before the Face, the *Weſts* Name ſignifies the *Back*, the *Norths* the left Hand, and the *Souths* the right. And this (as 'tis conceiv'd) in reſpect of his Poſture in the Worſhip of God at his firſt Creation, or rather in reſpect of both. As tho' as ſoon as made, he fell down and worſhipped the Author of his Being; and then nam'd the four parts of the Heavens accordingly. For the Worſhip of God is connatural with Man, and the effect of Natural Inſtinct. There are no Inſtitutions, no new Commands for it, but is ſuppos'd from the beginning. And therefore the poor *Gentiles*, that *felt after God* in that dark long Night of Ignorance that everwhelm'd them, tho' they often miſs'd the true Object, yet ſtill worſhip'd ſomething for him. And rather than not worſhip at all, they paid their Adorations (ſometimes) to the worſt of their fellow Creatures. The *Jews* had no Original Commands for this Natural Piece of Religion, but only clearer diſcoveries of the true Object of their Worſhip, a Reſtriction of it to him alone, and the Form and Manner of it preſcrib'd to them. And the *Chriſtians* who were bleſt with the brighteſt diſcoveries of both, are preſum'd to know this Original Principle; and thence are taught to improve it into a Worſhip worthy of God, *A Worſhip in Spirit and in Truth.*

Thus the Subject of this Diſcourſe is the Original Duty of Mankind, and from Nature; and ſo are the Aſſemblies for that purpoſe. It has been

been so always in Heaven and Earth, and an united Adoration was always expected and performed. Besides to acknowledge God in Private, is to tell him what our own Consciences will not suffer us to deny, but to meet together to Confess his Goodness, is Voluntary, Publick, and so more acceptable. And for *Time* and *Place* they were natural Appendages to every Solem Assembly, and it cannot be without them.

3. The Excellency of this great Duty appears in respect of the Object, which is as far above any other, as Heaven is above Earth, or God above Man, his Creature. Temperance and Sobriety are Duties in respect of our own well-beings, and we use 'em because we are convinc'd we cannot live well without them. And as for Justice and God-like Charity, self-reflection will enforce them; lest we our selves shou'd fall into the like circumstances. But this Duty of Divine Adoration is the effect of an ingenuous and grateful Nature, that reflects on his Divine Bounty with thankfulness. It is worthy a Rational Soul and a thinking, thankful Creature, when he offers up a Sacrifice of a Free-will Offering, and Praises his Maker with joyful Lips.

4. Thus you see what the Subject of this Book is, and its Excellency. But, alas! that any thing of this Nature shou'd be thought unnecessary in this Age of the World, and of Christian Religion! that after the Example of all Ages and Times, this Original Instinct of Nature shou'd be overborn and blotted out by the force of Vice and Ingratitude! That after so many Ages of Christianity, so many Examples and Books of Piety to improve this Natural Worship of the Deity, the thing it self shou'd be in danger to be lost by a ge-

neral coldneſs of theſe times! And yet ſo it is— The whole World of Chriſtendom ſeems to be divided betwixt two Parties; The furious *Zealots* and the cold and ſenſeleſs *Ignorants*. As for the Moderate, Rational and Intelligent *Religioniſts*, they are ſo few, that they make but little Figure in it. The firſt are Fire and Flame all over. They are nothing but Fury and Paſſion when they ſpeak of this Worſhip; but then 'tis only for their own peculiar Mode and Way of it, and they damn all Mankind that uſe any other, and conſequently one another. Now there being ſo many and contrary Ways and Modes in their Worſhip, and ſo many Myſteries and Criticiſms in each of them, and each urg'd on pain of Damnation, many a Man deſpairing to find out the true way amongſt ſuch uncertainties, have taken up with the *Deiſts*, and cryed out againſt all as Cheats and Impoſtors. In the mean time, the *Ignorant* and *Unconcern'd* (the other ſort) like *Gallio*, *care for none of theſe things*. They trouble not themſelves about the thing call'd Religon, but mind their Worldly Concerns. They are no more Chriſtians than they are made in their Infancy, and improve themſelves no farther. They venture another Life, and the Circumſtances of the World to come, to take care of the preſent.

As for the Religion of the *Church* of *England by Law eſtabliſhed*; as it is of all others, the moſt Moderate, Charitable and Obliging; So her Regular Pious Members are Men of the moſt Moderate, and Charitable and Obliging Principles and Converſations. Few of them are of a hot Zealotic and Perſecuting Spirit. And it was not the temper of the *Sons of that Church*, but the Severity of the Laws then in force, put into Execution by the Oaths,

Oaths, that were to be taken, and by designing Men that serv'd a Turn by them) that made her accus'd of Persecution. They are generally Men of Sober and Moderate Principles, and serve God in a steddy and regular way betwixt Superstition and Singularity, the Pretences to *Infallibility* and *Enthusiasm*. They Sentence and Condemn none, and have a great Charity (as well as Love) for those that differ from them——But as there be few or none of the first within her Pale, so there be many of the latter sort that shelter themselves under her Wings and Name. Not that they are really of her Communion (for none are such, but those that Conscientiously Communicate with her in the use of the Ordinances of Salvation) but because they are Baptized in their Infancy by her Ministers, and according to her Form of Baptism, and have not since publickly deserted her Communion, but come now and then to some part of the Service, therefore they are reputed hers. And hence it is that she (Innocent as she is) bears the blame of their Coldness, and sometime of their Irreligion and Debauchery.

These are the Men that this Discourse looks full upon, and is directed to: Not those we call *Dissenters*, that refuse to Communicate in the Worship of our Church, upon pretence of some Doubt or Scruple of Conscience. Even those (if they wou'd lay aside their Pride, Opinionatry, Self-Interest, and Prejudices, and put themselves into a kind of Neutrality) might without doubt, find Satisfaction in the learned Defences of the Church; tho' clog'd with these, they can never do it. But my business is not with these, but with the *Absenters* and *Neglecters* of the Divine Service, upon Secular and Carnal Considerations. To

Convince and Convict our Cold, Ignorant and Unconcern'd half Chriſtians, that live without God in the World, and neither regard Him, his Day nor his Worſhip. And theſe will fall more or leſs under our Obſervation, according to the ſeveral Degrees of that Neglect.

5. Some generally frequent the Service of God, when they have little or nothing elſe to do, but readily diſpence with it upon the leaſt Sollicitations of Buſineſs or Pleaſure. Theſe will ſerve God when they cannot ſerve themſelves, and will ſeem to be Religious rather than be idle. Others come to Church ſometimes out of Cuſtom, and think it a kind of Decency to frequent it once in the Week: Their Fore-fathers us'd to do ſo, and they continue that Laudable Formality. A third ſort ſhall have Worldly concerns to call them thither, to meet a Neighbour, and ſpeak with him about Buſineſs. And a forth ſort perhaps are willing to ſee Friends, take the Air, and ſee how the World goes. A fifth hath a great Zeal after good Sermons, and ſo will go many Miles to hear a *Gifted* and well Edifying Preacher. Theſe generally reſt in the Tone, Geſture and Voice of him that ſpeaks, and if they hearken to any Sentence, 'tis to allay the itch of their Ears, and ſo to gratifie their Curioſity. This ſort ſeldom frequent the Church, if there be no Sermon, nor care they for the Prayers at all, but deſpiſe them as Carnal; but they will take care to come before the Text is taken out, hear as Criticks, and Judges of what is ſaid; and then they go home and Repeat, Cenſure, and Commend, as they think the Preacher deſerves. And laſtly, (that I mention no more) there are many that are half Church-men, and half Chriſtians, that duly

frequent

frequent the Prayers and Preaching, but seldom or never the chiefest part of God's Service (I mean) the *Lord's Supper.*

Among all these, the most Dull and Earthly, are the Inferior sort of the Vulgar, that concern not themselves about Religion, and seldom go to any Church or Meeting. These usually labour hard all the Week in their Callings, and make the Lord's-day truly a *Sabbath* (as our Nicer sort of People love to call it) a meer *Jewish Sabbath*; a day of Rest. They sleep long in the Morning, rise to Dinner, and after that walk abroad, or Refesh themselves at home in lawful or sinful Exercises, or Discourses; in Recreations, Drinking, Laughing, Jesting, Visiting, and such like, according to their several Natures and Inclinations. A dull sluggish sort of People, in respect of Religion (tho not in matters of this Life) who (tho' they wou'd be call'd Christians, yet) neither care to be inform'd in the Principles of Christianity, nor pursue them. What proportion these bear to the rest, I cannot say; but I doubt, I shall have reason to affirm them the *Majority.* To all these, but— to these last especially, is this Discourse directed; desiring them, that as they prize their Immortal Souls (and such sure they will not doubt but they have) and Heaven and their happy Estate in the World to come (for sure they cannot desire to be miserable, when this Mortal Life is ended) they wou'd attentively weigh and consider what I have writ upon this Subject; and if they think it reasonable, submit to its Convictions, and form their Lives accordingly, lest it shou'd be objected against them at the last day, that they had means and opportunity to be inform'd, but they wou'd not. That

they choſe *Darkneſs rather than Light*, becauſe they wou'd continue Evil.

Nay, the more Learned and Religious, will yet perhaps find themſelves concern'd in theſe Papers, if they conſider their general Indifferency and Coldneſs in the Service of God. For Men do not conſider the neceſſity of the thing, and therefore can diſpence with the Performance of it upon any Secular avocation. Whereas it is (and will appear to be) a Duty hardly diſpenſable upon any account, but that of God himſelf, to whom it is performed; I mean upon the account of Sickneſs or incapacity; and that our Worldly Cares as well as Religion, are to give place to it.

Add to this, that this *Work of Angels* is perform'd by moſt Men with that careleſſneſs and unconcern, that they may be well ſuppos'd not to be in earneſt, but that it is the *Relict* of an old cuſtom, kept ſtill in reverence to our Anceſtors, to Decency, and the Faſhion.—— In a word, the *Carnal*, the *Careleſs*, as well as *Prophane*; all *Formaliſts*, as well as *Irreverent Attendants*, on the Service of God, all *Curious and itching Hearers*, all thoſe that attend the Divine Service by halves, and abſent themſelves from any part, all thoſe that come not at the beginning, or ſtay till the end of it, are concern'd in this Diſcourſe. And that it may have Divine Authority in the Front of it, I have choſen to fix my *Station upon Holy Ground*, and from thence (as my Poſt) Batter the Pretences and Practices of this ſort of Impiety. And thoſe are the words of the *Divine Author to the* Hebrews, *cap.* 10. 25. *Not forſaking the Aſſembly of your ſelves as the manner of ſome is, but exhorting one another.*

A DISCOURSE OF *Religious Aſſemblies*, &c.

CHAP I.

Of the Explanation of the Words, &c.

1. FOR the Occaſion and Reſolution of theſe words, I ſhall give this ſhort account. The Enemies of the Infant Church of Chriſt, (beſides the Common one of Paganiſm) were at the times of the writing this Epiſtle, theſe two, *viz.* the *Jews* and the *Gnoſticks*. *viz.*

The Enmity of the *Jews* aroſe partly out of a miſtaken Zeal for the Law of *Moſes*; and partly out of an invidious apprehenſion of the *Partition-Wall* to be broken down, and the *Gentiles* to be admitted into the Covenant of God on the terms of the Goſpel. Theſe made 'em bitter Enemies to increaſing Chriſtianity, and to all the Propagators of it. 'Twas the *unbelieving* Jews

Jews *that out of Envy ſpoke againſt thoſe things, taught by the Apoſtles, Contradicting and Blaſphemiing; and theſe ſtirred the Devout and Honourable Women, and the Chief Men of each City, and raiſed up Perſecutions againſt them*, as the Hiſtory of their Acts do declare.

The *Gnoſtics* were a degenerate and Carnal ſort of pretended Chriſtians; wearing that name, but giving up themſelves to all manner of Luxury, and Falſehood. Men that cou'd diſpence with all manner of Carnality in Private, and with denying their Religion in Perſecutions in Publick. Men that under the Cloak of Religion, cou'd yet defile the Fleſh, and corrupt themſelves even in thoſe things they knew naturally beyond the Brute Beaſts. And when they were Examined concerning their outward Profeſſion, cou'd lay it aſide for an opportunity, and take it again as ſuted beſt with their Worldly Intereſt. They were call'd *Gnoſtics*, becauſe of their ſwelling words and pretences to Knowledge; and tho' we find not that name in the *Acts* or *Epiſtles* of the *Apoſtles*, (becauſe poſſibly not generally known by it till afterwards) yet we find a lively deſcription of them in moſt.

2. Betwixt both theſe, Chriſtianity was in great danger, and the unconfirm'd Chriſtians were apt to be frighted, or deceived into a Deſertion. The cruel Perſecutions of the one might well terrifie them, and the Carnal Liberties, the other allowed themſelves, invite them over to a Defection. This the Author of our *Epiſtle* took notice of, deſcribes theſe Deceivers (as the other *Apoſtles* had done) and ſhews the danger of ſuch Defection, which was the Moral Impoſſibility of the

the Renovation of such as were Illuminated by Baptism, and admitted by it, not only into the Common Privileges of Christianity, Peace, and Pardon of Sin, but into some extraordinary Gifts of the Holy Ghost that had tasted of the Promises of God, and had Experience of the Powers of the World to come after all these Solemn Engagements, to Apostatize from the Faith, either for fear of Persecution, and through *Gnostical* Infusions, was to be lost for ever, seeing they Crucifie to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him again to open shame. And therefore in this Chapter he exhorts the *Christian Jews* that they should not be disheartened by the unbeliving *Jews*, nor deceiv'd by the Carnal *Gnosticks* into Apostacy; but that they should *hold fast the Profession of the Christian Faith, or hope without wavering, because God is Faithful that hath Promised* them Assistance here, and Reward hereafter. Let us therefore (saith he) consider one anothers State and Condition, so as to *Encourage and Provoke one another to Love and Charity*; and (that we may do so) frequent constantly the Publick Assemblies, the Places and Times of the Worship of God after the Christian way. Some have been so far wrought upon by Fear and Sensuality, to forsake the Publick Assemblies of Christians, and thereby Renounce their Communion, and Apostatize from the Faith of Christ: Let these be Examples to you, to avoid such Rocks; keep up to the Publick Worship, and the Meeting of the Faithful for Religious Exercises; where you will find Encouragements to continue in the Faith.

3. This is the Occasion and Resolution of the Text, which consists in a Duty, the frequenting of

of the Chriſtian Aſſemblies, and the reaſon of that Duty, becauſe the day (of the Puniſhments of theſe Enemies the *Jews* and *Gnoſtics*, in the Deſtruction of *Jeruſalem*, and the Eternal Diſperſion of the *Jews*) was then approaching. The Reaſon thus underſtood, is no Reaſon to us, unleſs it by way of Proportion. And therefore I ſhall Treat only of the Duty as a ſtanding and continuing Duty in the Church, and Eſſential to its very Conſtituion. For the Caution of this Apoſtle to his *Hebrews*, extends its ſelf to all Ages, and eſpecially to theſe *Schiſmatical* and *Luke-warm* Times of ours; that we ſhould not neglect, much leſs *forſake the Aſſembling of our ſelves together, as the manner of ſome is*, &c.

The Subject of our preſent Diſcourſe then, is the frequenting of the Chriſtian Aſſemblies, or (as we Phraſe it at this day) the *Coming to Church*. There to meet together and perform our Publick Duty to our Common Lord and Saviour. In Treating of which, I ſhall conſider.

1. *The Original and Nature of the Duty it ſelf, and what the Chriſtians did at thoſe Aſſemblies, in the early Times.*

2. *The Time and Place of theſe; and what the Chriſtians of thoſe Times obſerv'd as to theſe particulars.*

3. *The abſolute Neceſſity of ſuch Aſſemblies, not only to the Being of the Church, but to the Salvation of every one of its Members.*

4. *The extreme Sinfulneſs of forſaking or neglecting of ſuch Aſſemblies, and the fatal Conſequences of ſuch Deſertion.*

5. *The*

5. *The Duty of every frequenter of them, and the manner how they ought to be Religiously obſerv'd.*

And this ſhall be purſu'd at large through the ſeveral Branches of the ſame, *viz. Praying*, *Preaching*, and the *Participation of the Sacraments*. So that the Piouſly-inclin'd may be directed in ſo great a Duty as the Publick Worſhip of his Maker, and the Neceſſity of ſuch Regular and Reverend Aſſemblies, Manifeſted and Declared, together with ſuch Applications and Reflections upon each Head, as are proper for the Age we live in. Which will take up the greateſt and moſt uſeful part of this Book.

I begin with the firſt Head of Diſcourſe. The Original and Nature of Chriſtian Aſſemblies in general, in the Chapter following,

CHAP.

CHAP. II.

Of the Original and Nature of Chriſtian Aſſemblies, &c.

1. TO find the Original and Nature of the Chriſtian Aſſemblies, we muſt look deep, and ſearch into the Law of Nature, and ſee what that taught thoſe that liv'd under its Government. Now, the Law of Nature we all know obliges every Man to the Duty of Gratitude, and to acknowledge his Benefactor. It is a Principle Implanted in every one of us, to Love, Reſpect, and be Thankful to him that doth us good. And the greater this Good is, and the oftner received, the greater are our Obligations to Thankfulneſs. Now, God is our great Creator, Preſerver, and Guide thro' the Maze of this World; and in him we Live, Move, and have our Being, and every thing we can expect here. And altho' we meet with many Earthly Benefactors, yet they are all not only Inferior, Secondary, and Subordinate, but alſo Inſtruments, and Miniſters (not of their own but) of his Gifts; and therefore whatſoever Thankfulneſs is due to them, ought to be Redoubled, Multiplied, and Centred in him, who is the Original of all good Gifts, and the firſt Mover to them. So that *David*'s Exhortation to himſelf, *Bleſs the Lord, O my Soul, and forget not all his Benefits*, Pſal. 103. 2. And his wiſh of Grati-

Gratitude to others, *Oh that Men would Praiſe the Lord for his Goodneſs, and for the Wonders, that he doth for the Children of Men*] is the Voice of Natural Reaſon, as well as Reveal'd Religion.

2. As our Reaſon teaches us to Conſider, Reflect upon, and Acknowledge God's Goodneſs, ſo it directs us where to Acknowledge them, and how, *viz.* In Publick, and before others of our own Nature. That we make our Agnitions as well known as the Benefits; and as we have receiv'd them Publickly, ſo declare Publickly that we have done ſo. Beſides, in all Acts of Virtue we ought to be Exemplary, and ſtir up others to the ſame Work. To tell God in Private only of his Goodneſs, is to tell him what he knows, and we cannot deny; but yet conceal it from all we can. But a Publick Confeſſion is the outward Teſtimony of the Internal Sentiments of our Gratitude. The inward Acknowledgments are made by framing Idea's of Submiſſion in our Minds, and the outward by Confeſſion of the Mouth and humble Proſtrations of the Body; and this is that which we call *Adoration* or *Divine Worſhip*. And when Men meet together to make ſuch mutual Acknowledgments (that is, to confeſs themſelves to be Men, and not Gods) we call them *Religious Aſſemblies*.

3. Nay Right-Reaſon, and the Law of Nature goes further, and teaches us the Neceſſity of the Miniſtry in theſe Religious Meetings. For 'tis notorious that every Man cannot have due Thoughts of God, or expreſs them in fit words, if he had. Nor can he utter his Mind in

in apt Expreſſions, but ſpeak incongruouſly to his Maker, and make himſelf Ridiculous to thoſe that hear him; and ſo render the Serious and Devout Agnitions of the Deity, the *Sacrifice of Fools.* Or if this cou'd be, yet every Man ſpeaking for himſelf muſt needs make a Confuſion. And therefore Humane Reaſon tells us, that there ſhou'd be one or more ſet a-part to be the Mouth of the Congregation to God, and ſo Offer him a Decent, as well as Rational Service. So that not only Religious Aſſemblies, but alſo *Prieſts* to aſſiſt and manage the ſame, are the effect of the Law of God written in our Hearts, which we call the Law of Nature; and whoſoever contradicts this Order, contradicts his own Reaſon, as well as the general Uſage of Mankind, at the ſame time.

From the ſame Original may be deduc'd *Tythes*, *Offerings*, and *Sacrifices* of *Thankſgiving*, which all are nothing elſe but the Payment of *Quit-Rent*, a little Portion of God's Bleſſings in return for the reſt. As for Sacrifices of Expiation, I look upon them of a later Date, and the Effect of God's poſitive Inſtitution to the *Jews*, from whence they crept into the *Gentile*-Worſhip, and ſo are not the Conſequences of the Law of Nature. Theſe fall not within the compaſs of my Subject. But to return,

4. From hence the *Patriarchal* Worſhip took its Original. Their Reaſon told them that God was to be Worſhipp'd, and Gratitude oblig'd them to meet together, and make theſe Publick Acknowledgments. And the *Eldeſt* (who alſo ſhou'd be the Graveſt and Wiſeſt) took upon him the Office of a *Prieſt*, and was the Mouth of

of the reſt, and every Man brought in his Offerings, as grateful Returns of a little part for the Enjoyment of the whole. And this was the Nature of the Publick Aſſemblies under the Law of Nature. And from hence it is that we read of *Prieſts*, *Sacrifices*, *Forms of Worſhip*, and *Religious Aſſemblies* in all Places and Nations, and in all Ages of the World from the beginning; whoſe Worſhip was either pure or corrupt according to their Light or Darkneſs, and their true or falſe Notions of the Deity.

From theſe Effects of Natural Religion, let us proceed to that which is Revealed. And that is either the *Jewiſh* or *Chriſtian*.

5. The *Jewiſh* Aſſemblies were particularly ordered by God, and the many Ceremonies, Modes, and Types appointed by his ſpecial Order. But then theſe were but Super-additions to the Law of Nature, partly to buſie and imploy that groſs People, during the time of Divine Service, and fix their Thoughts on their Work, and partly to point out Chriſt which was to come. For theſe Ceremonies being remov'd, the Subſtance was the ſame as before; Acknowledgments of God's Goodneſs and Thankſgivings, *viz. Acts of Gratitude*, common to all Mankind, expreſt in a peculiar manner, as it pleaſed the Divine Wiſdom; the Worſhip of the Ancient *Patriarchs* in a *Jewiſh* Mode, exhibited in peculiar Types and Ceremonies.

6. As for the Chriſtian Aſſemblies of thoſe Times when this Epiſtle was Written, the Scriptures of the New Teſtament have not furniſhed us with a compleat Draught of the Order of

their Service, and the Ceremonies of it; only there are ſome Strokes occaſionally made here and there diſperſedly, which ſome gather together, and thereby endeavour to repreſent its Picture; of which yet there are endleſs Doubts and Diſputings. I ſuppoſe a truer Account, and more probable, may be taken from the *Eccleſiaſtical Hiſtories* of the following Ages (the Scriptures not ſtaying upon the Ceremonial part of Religion) out of which take this brief Account following.

In thoſe early and beſt Times, the buſineſs of the Chriſtian-Aſſemblies conſiſted in Prayers, in reading the Holy Scriptures, and the Explications and Applications of ſome part of that which was read, made by the *Biſhop*, or ſome Grave *Presbyter* he appointed: And thoſe Diſcourſes were call'd by the *Greek* Fathers Ὁμιλίαι *Homilies*, that is, Inſtructions to the People. And by the *Latins*, *Sermons*, as they are at this Day. After this the *Catechumens* and *Penitents* (that is, the Young Catechiſed Chriſtians and thoſe that were under Penance for any Crime) were diſmiſſed the Aſſembly, and the Faithful remained to receive the dear Pledges of their Salvation; which laſt Office was begun and continued with ſutable Prayers, and ended with Praiſes. The *Biſhops* (if preſent), the *Prieſts* and *Deacons* managed the whole Affair; and the People joyn'd their Part in the Service, by making their *Reſponſes*, and adding at the end of every Prayer, their *Amen*.

7. Both Sexes came to theſe Aſſemblies in Comely Apparel and Grave Pace; with Modeſt Silence, Love unfeign'd and Chaſte in Body and Mind.

Mind. They discharged the Solemn Duties of the same, with the greatest Reverence and Devotion; with Actions and Gestures that might best express the inward Piety, and Humility of their Minds. They demean'd themselves with Calmness, Modesty, Order, Fear, and Reverence, as in the Presence of God and his Holy Angels. The Men with their Heads uncovered, which was in those days a sign of Honour and Prerogative, as not afraid to look upwards (tho' Custom has since something alter'd this particular) the Women with their Heads and Faces covered, as a sign of their Subjection and Modesty.

In Prayer they most commonly kneeled, and at some particular times stood, and that for a particular Reason and Ceremony. Sitting at the time of that Service, was cried out against by the Ancient Fathers as an Act of the greatest Rudeness and Irreverence. They heard the Scriptures read with Reverence and Concern; and stood most part of the time of Sermon to keep their attention awake and lively. And if any sat down at any part of the Reading or Preaching, yet at the Reading of the H. Gospel, they all arose and stood upright, High and Low, Rich and Poor, Prince and Peasant, in respect to the words of the *King of kings*. And this last Ceremony was Universal in all times and places; and continues in our Church to this day. The Sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper (which were the other businesses of these Assemblies) were performed with singular Zeal, Reverence, and Frequency. The warm Breath of the Holy Jesus was then upon them, and inflam'd their Heads and Hearts with the Love of their Crucified Saviour;

and they car'd not how often they repreſented the lively Hiſtory of his Paſſion to themſelves, or renewed the *Idea* of his Sufferings to their Mind and Eyes. And this was as common as their daily Service, and Prayers, (as I ſhall have occaſion to note in its place) nor did the commonneſs abate their Devotion.

They ended their Publick Devotions with Joy, Love and new Engagements to God, and one to another. And this being done, they Decently, Orderly, and Silently departed to their own Homes; not Cenſuring, Judging, or Condemning one another; not Remarking, Applauding or Ridiculing any Sentence they had heard, or Geſture they had ſeen; but Recollecting, Applying, and Practiſing the ſame to their Spiritual Improvements.

8. Such were the Efforts of Primitive Piety, now long ſince loſt, as to its degrees of Intention, tho' not Eſſence. The ſame in ſubſtance ſtill remains to us, and we agree with them, as they did with the Dictates of the Law of Nature. Their Prayers, Praiſes, Inſtructions, Vows, Obligations to Obedience, and Sacraments, being nothing elſe but ſo many ways of expreſſing their Gratitude to their Supreme Lord, and Engagements to live accordingly. This was alſo the Subſtance of the Worſhip of the *Jews* and *Patriarchs*, and the end that even the *Gentiles* aim'd at in their miſtaken Applications. And thus much of the Original Nature and End of the Religious Aſſemblies of the Primitive Ages, in which if I have been ſomething over curious in founding them in the Law of Nature, the inquiſitive Reader will find

find the Reaſon in the thing it ſelf, and the Influence it ought to have upon us in its due place. Mean time I will deſcend to the time and places of the ſame which deſerve ſome Conſideration in a Diſcourſe of this Nature.

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CHAP. III.

Of the Time and Place of Divine Worſhip.

TIme and Place are peculiar adjuncts to every Action; And ſo they were to thoſe of Religion. I ſhall ſpeak of both theſe in this Chapter, briefly as not ſo directly belonging to my Deſign. And firſt of the time of theſe Aſſemblies.

1. For the Time of theſe Aſſemblies. If we look into the Law of Nature, we ſhall find it not limitted to any one particular Day, no, nor to one in Seven; but to ſome Time proper and ſufficient for the performance of the Duty. For as that teaches us that God is to be worſhipped, ſo it will likewiſe oblige us to chuſe ſome fit time for that Worſhip, and nothing elſe; according to the *Adage* of the Wiſe Man: *To every thing there is a Seaſon, and a Time to every purpoſe under Heaven.* And therefore, tho' the Primitive Fathers are generally of Opinion, that the Patriarchs kept no *Sabbaths*, as the *Jews* did, yet it is to be preſum'd that they had Times ſet apart for the Duties of Religion, ſufficient for that purpoſe.

2. To the *Jews* the poſitive Law of God was, that the *Seventh Day* ſhould be Sanctified as a *Sabbath*; that is, a Day of Reſt from all the ordinary Works of their Vocation, that they might the better attend the Service of God on that day, and their own on the ſix following. For I am very

ry confident that that extreme rigor of reſting (that is, not going forth of their Habitations, and of not lighting a Fire on the *Sabbath-day*) was only Temporary during their Travel in the Wilderneſs. Beſides this weekly Holy-day, they had alſo many others in the whole Year by Divine Appointment, both *Feaſts* and *Faſts* upon ſeveral occaſions, which were likewiſe Dedicated to God and his Service in theſe Aſſemblies. All theſe were Judicial or Ceremonial, and ſo were proper to that Nation and Law; and ſo muſt ceaſe when both are at an end. And therefore (as I humbly conceive, with ſubmiſſion to the Judgment of my Superiours in this point) there remains nothing of the fourth Commandment of Eternal Obligation to the Chriſtians, but the Equity of it; that is, that God ſhould have ſome ſufficient time ſet apart for his Service amongſt us, as he had amongſt them.

3. And accordingly we find, that the *Apoſtles* appointed another day, *viz. the firſt day of the Week*, for the keeping the Solemn Aſſemblies for Divine Service; and that in Remembrance of our Lord's Reſurrection. And tho' in ſome Eaſtern Churches (in compliance to the *Jews*) the *Saturday* was for a ſhort time obſerv'd, (as was alſo ſome other of the Jewiſh Ceremonies) yet in the generality, it was otherwiſe. And as thoſe firſt Chriſtians kept a Weekly Day of God's Service in Imitation, and upon Parity of Reaſon that the *Jews* kept their *Sabbath*; ſo (that they might not be behind them in their Devotions, and upon the ſame Parity of Reaſon) they appointed ſeveral other *Feaſts* and *Faſts* for the uſes of Religion. Such were thoſe Annual ones of our *Lord's Incarnation*,

nation, *Death*, *Reſurrection*, *Aſcenſion*, and of the *Donation of the Holy Ghoſt*, and afterwards thoſe in Remembrance of the *Holy Apoſtles*. And this took place in the Church earlier or later, according as thoſe Bleſſings which caus'd them, happened, and which were to be kept in Remembrance by them.

4. As for the Lord's-day (which we at preſent Treat of) ſo call'd, becauſe he (on that day) ſhew'd himſelf to be ſo, by his Glorious Reſurrection, We find it mentioned as an uſual day of Publick Aſſemblies, immediately after our Saviour's Aſcenſion; and that for Solemn Prayers and Adorations, and the Participation of the Sacraments, as alſo of Preaching and Exhortations, *Acts* 20. 7. And before that, it was the day of *Pentecoſt*, the Donation of the Holy Spirit, *Acts* 2. 1. And the day of Publick Collections for the uſes of Piety and Charity, 1 *Cor.* 16. 2. And it is obſervable, that it had obtain'd the Name of the *Lord's-day* (for whoſe honour it was obſerv'd) in the latter days of St. *John*, *Rev.* 1. 10. And it has been obſerv'd for the ſame purpoſes, and call'd by the ſame Name by all Orthodox Chriſtians ever ſince. For the Annual times of Solemn Aſſemblies, tho we find not any direct mention of them in the *Acts* of the *Apoſtles*, or their *Epiſtles*; yet we are ſufficiently aſſured by Eccleſiaſtical Hiſtory, that they were Inſtituted either by the Apoſtles or their Succeſſors. And theſe continue yet alſo in the Church, tho' not obſerv'd with the ſame ſtrictneſs with the *Lord's-day*. To theſe we may add the daily Prayers in the Temple frequented by the Pious Chriſtians in the pureſt Ages (as appears, *Acts* 2. 46.) and the hours of Prayers

Prayers obſerv'd likewiſe amongſt the moſt Zealous Profeſſors of thoſe times; a Sample of which continues ſtill in our *Cathedrals*, and more Eminent Churches to this day, where the more Devout, and thoſe that are looſe from the World, may ſtill (as they did Antiently) frequent the Worſhip of God. And ſo much of the Times of Religious Aſſemblies.

5. For the Places of Religious Aſſemblies. The Law of Nature, and the Univeral Reaſon of Mankind Teaches us, that there muſt be ſome place aſſign'd ſuitable to the Work; and ſuch (I do not queſtion) were in uſe before *Moſes*'s Law, even from the beginning. And therefore we read that *Cain* and *Abel brought their Sacrifies to the Lord*, viz. to ſome place appointed for that purpoſe. The *Heathens* and *Gentiles* had their Temples and Groves for the Worſhip of him they thought to be the True God; which they embelliſh'd with the greateſt Coſt and Riches. And the True God himſelf, appointed the places of his Worſhip among the *Jews*, and the ſeveral Ornaments of the ſame, made of the moſt precious things that cou'd be obtain'd by that People. The Tabernacle was adorn'd with the choiceſt Materials that a wandring Nation cou'd procure; and the Temple with the beſt of the beſt. A goodly Pile of Building this, mounting aloft into the Air, ſhining both without and within; a Type and Samplar (as far as Art and Nature cou'd expreſs) of the Heavenly Temple that is above. And becauſe this Magnificent Building cou'd not be frequented by thoſe that liv'd at a diſtance; they had likewiſe their *Synagogues* in every City and Village, the *Proſeuchai's* or *Oritories*, in ſolitary places, and

and their *Alijoths*, or *Upper-Rooms* (that is) Oratories made and ſet apart for Prayer in many Houſes of Note (like our Chappels in thoſe of Noblemen) placed at the top of the Houſes, as neareſt to Heaven, where they Aſſembled for Family Devotion. And of theſe we are told, there were ſeveral in the Temple built round about it, and ſtanding open for the uſe of the Devout and Religious. Beſides thoſe in other Cities, and many conſiderable Houſes. All which will appear to the Curious Enquirer from ſeveral intimations in the *New Teſtament*, and the Jewiſh Authors.

6. For the firſt Chriſtians, their conſtant uſe of places Conſecrated to Religion (when they might be had) above others is very remarkable. For we find that Chriſt, the Author and Finiſher of our Faith, firſt viewed, then viſited and reform'd the Temple with a Scourge; and a ſort of Zeal mixt with Indignation, Unuſual to him that was at other times the moſt Meek and Humble. And further, that he own'd it even at that time to be his Houſe, and declar'd the right uſe of it, to be a *Houſe of Prayer for all Nations*. And it is very obſervable, that this Viſitation and Reformation was made by him twice, much after the ſame manner; The firſt in the firſt year of his Miniſtry; and the ſecond in his third (which was the moſt Magnificent and Solemn) as will appear by comparing the three firſt Evangeliſts with the 4th of *John*, 2. 14. who being the laſt, took care in his Goſpel to ſupply the omiſſions of the three former. Beſides this, he frequented their *Synagogues*, and took the opportunity of their Aſſemblies there, to inſtruct them. And ſo did his Diſciples alſo, where they might; and where they might

might not, ἀνέβησαν εἰς τὸ ὑπερῶον, they ascended to the *Upper Room* spoken of before, where we shall find St. *Paul* at *Troas*, where *the Young Man fell down from a Window* three Stories high. And sometimes they us'd the προσευχαὶ, or Houses of Prayer, *as that by the River-side out of the City*, where *Lidia* was Converted. And our Saviour is said to continue in one of these in a Mountain all night, *Luke* 6. 12. *not in Prayer to God*, as it is usually translated, but in one of those Houses of Prayer, in an Oratory, and this in order to the Election of the twelve Apostles. And finally, it is very plain, that the Holy Ghost in the second of the *Acts*, *was shed down upon the Heads and Hearts of the little Church of Christ*, gathered together in one of these (ὑπερῶα) *Upper Rooms*, or Oratories appointed for Prayer. And it is at least probable that this *Upper Rome*, was one of those in the Temple afore-mentioned; as will appear by comparing the words of St. *Luke* in the last Verse of his Gospel, and those in the 13 Verse of the 1st Chapter of the *Acts* together. And if any Man doubt of this, let him read the learned *Hammond* on this last place; and this probably made the multitude find the way so readily thither upon the noise of their speaking with *New Tongues*, *as the Spirit gave them utterance*. And as for their *breaking of Bread from House to House* (in the 46 Verse of this 2d Chapter) κατ' οἶκον which the Margin makes signifie at home, is more properly translated in the House or Rome, which at least probably was one of the Chambers of the Temple also.

7. This was the practice of the Apostles and their Successors when they durst. They took the liberty

liberty to meet Publickly in places ſet apart for that purpoſe. And 'tis more than probable that part of the *Money brought and laid at the Apoſtles feet*, and the exceſſive Piety of that Age, was laid out in providing fit Meeting-places which even then were call'd ἐκκλησίαι Churches, from the Aſſemblies uſually made there. And it is plain from the Context and Circumſtances of the words, that St. *Paul* means the Places, not the People, by theſe Expreſſions, *When ye come together in the Church*, 1 Cor. 11. 18. *That is into one place*, v. 20. *And* v. 22. *What, have ye not Houſes to eat and drink in, or deſpiſe you the Church of God?* Where there is an evident diſtinction made betwixt theſe two places and their different uſes; our own Houſes and the Church (or place of Divine Worſhip) which is God's—— And then for their immediate Succeſſors, there can be no queſtion but they continued thoſe Aſſemblies, and that in places ſet apart in times of Liberty; theſe places or Oratories were greater or leſſer in every City, where there were any Chriſtian Proſelytes form'd into a Body of Clergy and People; and in ſome places where there was a *Biſhops Chair*, their Sacred places were Capacious and Conſiderable. Of all which I will not be ſo impertinent in this Age, and in ſo known a point, to produce Teſtimonies. I ſhall only add, that this was during the intervals of the ten Perſecutions, and before the time of *Conſtantine*.

8. And (to gather up all that I have ſaid) thus was it in thoſe firſt and beſt times, as near to thoſe of my Author in the Text, as the beſt Hiſtorians relate, when he exhorts the *Hebrew Chriſtians*, not to make ſo great a defection as to forſake

ſake the Publick Aſſemblies. Their buſineſs there was to own their Maker, and acknowledge his benefits by a more rational Service than that of the *Gentiles*, or *Jews*. To confeſs his Goodneſs, and their own inſufficiency. To ſhew their Confidence in his Mercy, and ask *day by day their daily bread*, and finally to provoke one another to all this by mutual Example and Exhortation. Their times of this Service were the *Lord's-day* weekly, and upon leſſer *Feſtivals*, on *Wedneſdays* and *Fridays*, and (to thoſe of more leiſure and Devotion) every day. The place of all this was appropriate to this, and no other buſineſs, called from the higheſt Antiquity, and even in the *New Teſtament* (from the perſons meeting there) Churches. This being the Nature and Manner, Time and Place of ſuch Religious Aſſemblies, our Author ſpeaks of; (as I have Collected from the joynt Teſtimonies of unqueſtionable Antiquity) it therefore follows from this Portion of Scripture, that they were not to be neglected, much leſs forſaken, as was the manner of the deceitful *Gnoſtics*, and other falſe Chriſtians of that Age. And the poſitive Doctrine of the Text, is, That thoſe Chriſtians ſhou'd duly and conſcienciouſly frequent the Churches on thoſe days and at thoſe hours that they were opened for Publick Devotion. And becauſe the ſame Reaſon and Duty remains ſtill, and that this Rule is of force during our continuance in this World; the Text teaches the ſame Doctrine to us, *viz.* That we ſhou'd frequent the Church on the *Lord's days*, and other days appointed for the Worſhip of our Creator and Redeemer, and to be conſtant and bear our part in the Offices of Divine Service appointed for that purpoſe.

If

If I have been too Critical in ſearching into the Original Nature, End, Time and Place of Divine Aſſemblies, and have founded them in the Law of Nature, and the Equity of the things themſelves: it was becauſe I wou'd ſhew the reaſonableneſs of this Duty, and the unreaſonableneſs of our careleſs Neglecters, who under the profeſſion of Chriſtianity, do yet count it a thing too indifferent. And if I have ſtaid too long in viewing the Practice of the Primitive Church, it was to juſtifie the Church of which we are Members, and let the Reader ſee, that what we do and hold in this matter, was from the beginning. For if from thoſe happy times of Zeal and Devotion, we look down to this wretched Age, (wretched for coldneſs and indifferency, as well as Diviſion) we may yet have this Comfort, that not only our Times and Places, but our Religious Worſhip is in Subſtance ſtill the ſame as it was in the firſt times of Chriſtianity. The times of this Duty are ſtill the *Lord's day* weekly, and the *Annual Faſts* and *Feſtivals*. We have hitherto our Select and Dedicated places for Divine Service, our *Churches*, *Chappels*, and *Oratories*. And the work we do in them is the ſame as at the firſt Inſtitution; the Celebration of the Praiſes of our Creator and Redeemer, and the owning of our unworthineſs, and the dependance we have on him. Our returns of Gratitude for what we have received, (as well, as our Petitions for what we want) are ſtill the ſame, and this *was from the beginning*, *is now*, and (I hope) *ever ſhall be* our daily practice. And this we do in this Church (which I beſeech God long to continue to us) and moſtly in the ſame words and Ceremonies (as far as the different times and circumſtances will permit)

mit) as the Primitive Christians did. And I defie all the Enemies of our Church, and all Dissenters from her Publick Constitution, to shew any contrariety (if they can variation) from the antient way of Worship; to the frequenting of which, our Apostle in the Text exhorts us, *Not to forsake the Publick Assembly as some* (Apostates) *have done.* And which I have undertaken to reinforce more particularly, by shewing the necessities of such Assemblies, not only to the being of the Church, but to the Salvation of every one of its Members.

And this is my next work in the four following Chapters.

CHAP.

CHAP. IV.

Of the Neceſſity of Chriſtian Aſſemblies for Divine Worſhip, &c.

THis Head of Diſcourſe concerning the Neceſſity of Chriſtian Religious Aſſemblies, may ariſe from the twofold Capacity of every Man. Firſt, in reſpect of the Church, of which he is a Member, and in reſpect of himſelf and his own Salvation.

1. There is a Neceſſity of Religious Aſſemblies, in reſpect of the Church of which we are Members, to continue and ſupport it, without which it muſt neceſſarily ceaſe and be diſſolv'd in the diſſolution of its Aſſemblies. Without this there wou'd be neither *Clergy* nor *Laiety*; no *Congregation of the Saints*; no *Teachers*, *Preachers*, nor *Inſtructers* in the Doctrine of Chriſt; nor any Hearer to be Taught and Inſtructed. No Spiritual Fathers, nor Spiritual Children; no Governours nor Governed, but every Order wou'd be diſſolv'd and turn'd all to common. And as this Syſtem of Heaven and Earth is now Beautiful in that wonderful Order of Beings, which reduces every thing to its particular Claſs, and preſerves it there, without intermingling with things of a contrary Nature; but wou'd be turn'd to its *ancient Chaos*, if the Bounds which ſeparates the ſeveral ſorts of *Beings*, were once broke down, and their diſtin-

ſtinguiſhing Properties taken away; So the times and places of Divine Worſhip being effac'd, and all Religious Meeting diſſolv'd, there wou'd remain a miſerable face of things, a Maſs without Form or Shape, a Body of Chriſtianity, without Figure, Head, or Member.

2. But that which is worſe than all this, is yet to be conſidered. The very Being of the Chriſtian Religion (as well as that of an Orderly Church) requires frequent Religious Aſſemblies. The Intermiſſion of which muſt needs introduce a dark Night of Ignorance in matters of God. There wou'd be no Inſtructors or Remembrancers in the Duty we owe to God, and no Examples of the Payment of the Homage due to him; and ſo his Power and Juriſdiction over us wou'd be forgotten. Like a Lordſhip not continued by keeping of Courts, or demanding of Quit-Rents, and ſo loſt in Tract of Time. Beſides, the Principles of Religion wou'd be ſoon forgotten, and the Relation we bear to God wou'd be blotted out, and conſequently all Duty. Nothing but Barbariſm, Rudeneſs and Atheiſm (if that cou'd poſſibly prevail againſt our Natural Inſtinct) or rather Paganiſm ſucceed in its place. All the Memorials of God's Goodneſs and Mercy wou'd be remov'd, and his very Name forgotten, and ſo Religion muſt give place to Infidelity and Virtue to the moſt brutiſh Impieties.

3. And indeed, one great end of Religious Aſſemblies, and the Times and Places of the ſame, and the greateſt (next Worſhipping God, and procuring his Favour to us) is the keeping

his general and particular Mercies towards us in remembrance. Thus was it amongſt the *Jews*. Of the Paſſover, ſaith *Moſes*, *When your Children ſhall ſay unto you, what mean you by this Service?* That ye ſhall ſay, *It is the Sacrifice of the Lord's Paſſover, who paſſed over the Houſes of the Children of* Iſrael *in* Egypt, *when he ſmote the* Egyptians, *and delivered our Houſes*, &c. *Exod.* 22. 26, 27. And of the *Sabbath*, he ſays, *Remember that thou waſt a Servant in the Land of* Egypt, *and that the Lord brought thee out thence, thro' a mighty Hand, and an outſtretch'd Arm. Therefore the Lord thy God commandeth thee to keep the Sabbath-Day*, Deut. 5. 12. Thus (amongſt us Chriſtians) the end of every Lord's-Day (and every *Eaſter-Day* in particular) is to continue the remembrance of Chriſt's Reſurrection; that of *Pentecoſt* (or *Whit-Sunday*) the ſending of the *Holy Ghoſt*; and not only the other *greater Feaſts* of the *Incarnation*, *Manifeſtation*, or *Epiphany*, and his *Aſcention*, but the leſſer Holy-Days are nothing elſe but Memorials. And the Work that is (or ſhou'd be) done on theſe Days, beſides the Acts of Divine Adoration, are Reading, Preaching, and Hearing the Word of God in general, and the Subject of the Day in particular; by which not only Religion in it ſelf, but the peculiar Religion of the time (I mean) the Mercies of the Day, are repeated in our Ears, and applied to our Hearts. And here I cannot chuſe but commend to your Conſideration this Obſervation; that when the Times of Divine Service were all Abrogated, but only the *Lord's-Day*, and the Inſtructive and Rational Service of the Church of *England* forbidden (to give place to *Extemporary Prayers*, and

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Preaching) when the *Confession*, the *Creed*, the *Ten Commandments*, and the *Lord's-Prayer*, were left out as improper and Superſtitious; what a vain and phantaſtical Religion overſpread the Nation! The Principles of the Old Chriſtian Religion were (like a few Herbs in a full Field of Weeds) in danger to be over-run by old and new Errors and Hereſies. The ſubſtantial part of Chriſt's Religion began to be doubted of; and inſtead of it, nothing but Notion and Fancy took place, every thing began to be queſtion'd; inſomuch, that the *Powers* then in Being were forc'd to put the prime *Articles of Religion to the Vote*, and God muſt have continued his Deity no longer, if he had not pleaſed the *Parliament*. And thoſe that can remember the *Twenty Years of our Sin and Folly of our Rebellion againſt God and his Anointed*, of our Backſliding and Giddineſs, and will but give themſelves the ſpace of a Sober Reflection, may very well obſerve, that (notwithſtanding their Pretences to *New Light* and *Godlineſs*) the darkneſs of Infidelity overſhadowed ſome, and the mazing Light of *Enthuſiaſm* blinded others. So that few cou'd find the *Good old way*; and thoſe that ſtill remembred it, durſt not walk in it. And we have reaſon to remember thoſe Times from the innumerable ſwarms of Hereſies which were hatch'd then, and have afflicted and divided us ever ſince. All which proceeded from the Suppreſſion of the Service of God, according to the *Liturgy of the Church*, and intermiſſion of the Times and Seaſons of her Aſſemblies.

And yet even in thoſe Days, the *Lord's-Day* continued in more Obſervation than perhaps ever ſince or before; and there were then frequent

Aſſemblies for the End of Religion, *viz.* Long Prayers and long Preaching, and great Zeal for both. And if Religion, even then ſenſibly decay'd, both in its Theory and Practiſe for the intermiſſion of theſe Solemnities, and ſome neceſſary Circumſtances in the manner of the Service, what wou'd it have done, if all the Churches had been Demoliſhed; all Days of Religious Worſhip Abrogated, and all Aſſemblies forbidden? Certainly, in ſuch a Caſe Chriſtian Religion muſt have expir'd by degrees: Private Inſtructions cou'd not have preſerv'd it long, but it muſt have given up the Ghoſt, and *reſtor'd its Spirit to him that gave it.*

4. This the Enemies of Chriſtianity very well knew of old; and therefore when they thought to ſuppreſs that Religion utterly, they forbad their Publick and Private Aſſemblies; where they us'd to Exhort and build up one another in the Holy Faith. And accordingly the Chriſtians of thoſe Times were ſenſible of the dangerous Effects of ſuch Intermiſſions, and therefore wou'd meet, tho' it was by Night, and that in the *Cryptæ*, the *Grotts*, and the *Sepulchres* of their Martyrs out of the Cities; and wou'd ſerve God, tho' it was by Lamps or Moon-Light, and that in *Caves* or *Mountains*. And this likewiſe is evident by our daily Experience, if we conſider the great and profound Ignorance of our preſent Church-Abſenters. Their Knowledge only furniſhes them with ſome rude Notions, that there is a God, from whom, they will ſay, they hope for ſeaſonable Weather, Health, and other Temporal Bleſſings; and that is no more than the Heathens knew of Him in Theory,

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and much leſs than they knew of Him in Practice. They look upon Him as a Merciful Being; but withal, One not ſo much concern'd in our Omiſſions or Commiſſions; but that He will eaſily Pardon both. And then, as to His other Attributes, his Reveal'd Will, and our Duty thereupon (beyond the Rules of Common Juſtice and Charity betwixt Man and Man) together with all diſputable Points in Religion, this they leave to the *Curious* and *Book-Learned*. And if any of them come to have ſome Inſight into Religion, and a little warmth for it, he is uſually puft up, and thinks himſelf fit to be a Teacher; the effect of Darkneſs of Mind, and a ſudden and ſurpriſing Illumination. From all which it doth appear, that Abſenters from the Worſhip of God, go the ready way, as far as in them lies, to deſtroy not only it, but the Religion taught in it. It blots all the Principles of it out of Men's Minds, cools firſt, and then quenches the Love of God, and all the Moral Vertues that depend on it. Introduces dark Atheiſm, vile Affections, and the diſhonourable Pleaſures of Senſuality; and, in a Word, as an Enemy to God, oppoſes all the merciful Methods of Salvation, and his Kingdom in the Hearts of Mankind.

5. But let this Argument be granted, yet it will not have any Influence upon many. Some care not for the Being of a Church, which they have ſought to Expoſe and Undermine theſe many Years; and Others care not for Religion it ſelf, but long to break its *Bands, and caſt away its Cords from them.* The Atheiſt will not believe what he knows already, and therefore

will not learn more; and the Senſualiſt will abſent himſelf, that he may not awake his Conſcience, or cauſe any uneaſineſs in his Debaucheries. To theſe then, this, as well as other Arguments, are uſeleſs; yet, I hope the Reader, into whoſe Hands this may fall, has a ſerious deſire of the Favour of God here, and Salvation hereafter. To ſuch an one I ſhall offer ſome ſelect Arguments for frequenting the Church (the Houſe of Prayer and Divine Service) taken from his preſent and future Intereſt, which was the ſecond Head of Neceſſity, of which in the following Chapter.

CHAP.

CHAP. V.

The Neceſſity of Chriſtian Aſſemblies for Divine Worſhip, further prov'd.

THE Neceſſity of our Aſſemblies for the Service of God, and our due frequenting of the ſame, ariſes in the ſecond place, from our preſent and future Intereſt, the preſent Favour of God, and our Eternal Salvation. And this will appear from four Heads of Arguments.

1. From the Law of Nature, and our Obligations to Gratitude, Juſtice, and Truth.

2. From the Commands of God in his Revealed Will, and what he may reaſonably expect from us thereupon.

3. From the Examples of all good Men in all Ages, *Gentiles*, *Jews*, *Chriſtians*, and thoſe of all ſorts of Sects.

4. From our mutual Want of thoſe things to be obtain'd at ſuch Meetings. Mercies Temporal, Spiritual, and Eternal. And I ſhall endeavour to Illuſtrate each of theſe in their Order.

Firſt, 1. I ſay then that one Reaſon of our going to Church, and attendance at Divine Service there, is from the Law of Nature, and our

Obligations to Gratitude, Juſtice, and Truth. That which is written in our Hearts by the Law of Nature, cannot eaſily be blotted out. Natural Conſcience is its Touchſtone, and is common to every Man, and we cannot act counter to its Teſtimony, without the greateſt Violence to our ſelves. Now, we all know that the Law of Nature teaches us the great Duty of Gratitude, that is, that we acknowledge the benefits we have received, and that with Thankfulneſs. Ingratitude includes theſe two great Vices. 1. Injuſtice. 2. Falſhood. We are bound to pay what we owe, or elſe we are unjuſt, and to own the Good we receive from another, or elſe we are Guilty of the breach of Truth. Now, every benefit requires both theſe, that is, thanks to our Benefactor, and a Confeſſion or Acknowledgment of his Benefaction. The firſt may be Private, the ſecond muſt be Publick. He that is Guilty of the breach of the firſt is unjuſt, and denies his Benefactor that which is his due; and he that is Guilty of the breach of the ſecond is falſe in the higheſt Degree, (as well as unjuſt) and ſtifles that Truth that ought to be made known to others for their Imitation. Now the end of our Publick Aſſemblies (as it hath been noted above) is no other but to be Juſt, True, and Grateful, to make a publick Acknowledgment of God's continual Benefits to us; to confeſs we have receiv'd 'em, and declare that we are thankful for the ſame. To be ſo juſt to Truth, as to own that we have not our Being or Continuance from our ſelves, but from his Bounty; and ſo true to Juſtice, that (ſeeing he requires no other, nor indeed can we make him any other Satisfaction) we return him his Tribute

bute of Praiſe and Thankſgiving. And this being the Nature and End of our meeting at Church for Divine Service; it follows, that the neglect of ſuch Meetings, and ſuch Religious Service, is a Breach of the Law of Nature; and therefore they are not to be forſaken.

Secondly, 2. A ſecond Neceſſity ariſes out of God's poſitive Commands. God has not only tied us to it by our own natural Reaſon, but he has added his further Pleaſure by his particular Commands in this Caſe: Such are theſe, *Thou ſhalt fear the Lord thy God, and him ſhalt thou ſerve, and to him ſhalt thou cleave. He is thy Praiſe, and He is thy God, that hath done for thee theſe great and terrible things, which thine Eyes have ſeen*, Deut. 10. 20, *&c.* In which place, the Obligations from Mercies received are uſed to enforce the Duties of Fear, Obedience, Truſt, and Thankſgiving. And again, *Thou ſhalt fear the Lord thy God, and ſerve him, and ſwear by his Name*, Deut. 6. 13. which Words, our Lord interprets of Divine Adoration, and makes uſe of them againſt his Adverſary in his laſt Temptation, *Matth.* 4. 10. *Thou ſhalt Worſhip the Lord thy God, and him only ſhalt thou ſerve.* Where note alſo, that he extends the Obligation of them (even beyond the *Jews* to whom they were ſpoken) to all Beings (even to the Devils themſelves) and conſequently to all Mankind in general. In a word, all the Texts of Scripture that exhort us to the Service of God, ſuch as that, *Pſal.* 100. 2. *Serve the Lord with fear, and come before his Preſence with a Song.* Thoſe that Exhort us to come into his Preſence with Thankſgiving and Gratitude; Thoſe that

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call on us to Worſhip him, as that *Pſal.* 29. 2. *O worſhip the Lord in the beauty of holineſs*, &c. Thoſe that declare the uſe of the Houſe of God to be a Houſe of Prayer, and that exhort us to go thither and offer there our Sacrifices of Praiſe and Thankſgivings; Theſe all (I ſay) and many others are no other than expreſs Commandments to us to frequent the Church, and the Place and Times of Divine Service there. And 'tis obſervable in the two firſt Precepts of the *Decalogue*, God doth not ſo much command his Worſhip *de Novo* (preſuming that they wanted not ſuch a Commandment, having had ſo many already, beſides that implanted in them by the Law of Nature) as rectifie the Object, and direct their Adorations to himſelf only. *Thou ſhalt not make to thy ſelf any graven Image, nor the ſimiltude of any thing in Heaven above, or in the Earth beneath, nor in the Water under the Earth; thou ſhalt not bow down thy ſelf unto them, nor ſerve them*, &c. And yet theſe two Negative Commandments have the full force and Senſe of Affirmative ones, and contain the injunction of our Saviour above mentioned. *Thou ſhalt worſhip the Lord thy God, and him only ſhalt thou ſerve.* The ſum of all is this, leaſt Men ſhould not be ſo careful to look inward, and read this Leſſon in their own Hearts, God hath written it with his own Finger, and publiſhed it amongſt the Moral Commandments that oblige all Times and Nations, that he wou'd be publickly worſhipped.

Theſe be general Commands and oblige always, and then for particular Commands to the *Jews* about the Times, Places and Modes of his Worſhip, and how it ſhould be managed in a way ſuitable to the Divine Majeſty; you may find them under the

the *Old Law* in the Books of *Exodus* and *Leviticus*. As for the new Christian Law, there is no new particular Commandment given, no more than there is about Prayer, Alms, and several other Duties; but the Church is left to act according to the Law of Nature, and that which God gave to the *Jews*, (the Types and Ceremonies removed) as will further appear in the process of this Discourse, upon the third kind of necessity for Publick Assemblies, and which is this:

3. The Obligation of that lies upon us from the Example of all Good Men in all Ages, *Jews*, *Gentiles*, and all sorts of Christians.

For the *Gentiles*, they submitted *to the Law written in their Hearts*, and accordingly set apart Times and Places for the Worship of God, observ'd with the greatest strictness, and adorn'd with the greatest Charge. And tho' the Object of their Worship was wrong, yet in this they were right, *that God would be worshipped*. As they did as high as History can carry us, down to this day in all Nations and Places. And the Idolatrous *Indians* have their *Pagods* and *Temples*, as well as the *Mahomitans* their *Mosques* and Ceremonies of Divine Worship.

The *Jews* had their daily Prayer in the *Temple* at the several hours of it, as at their great *Cathedral*: Besides their *Synagogues*, many in every City, and one in every Village of Note, where Divine Service was performed at least once a week on the *Sabbath-days*. And it is very observable, that three times in the year (at the three great Feasts of the *Passover*, *Pentecost*, and that of *Tabernacles*) every Male in the Land was bound to make his Appearance at the *Temple*, and none to come

come empty handed. The Service of God amongſt the *Jews* was very troubleſome, and very chargeable, by reaſon of their Offerings of all ſorts, and their Sacrifices and Tythes, and the length of their Journeys; and yet I never heard of any of thoſe *Jews* themſelves, that ever grumbled at it. And if it be objected, that theſe Feaſts and Journeys were ſometimes for many years intermitted; I ſay ſo was the Worſhip of God in the *Temple* it ſelf, when they Apoſtatiz'd unto Idolatry in the Reigns of Wicked Kings, and ſo this is a very bad precedent. Nor can it be mentioned without a ſecret reflection on our ſelves, who under a Governmenment and Laws to command us this part of Piety, do yet turn Spiritual Idolators, or what is worſe, Atheiſts.

4. What Order our Lord left with his Apoſtles to continue to the Church as to Times and Places of Divine Worſhip is not particularly Recorded; but we find by their Practice that they acted much after the Jewiſh Pattern. They Inſtituted a *Lord's-day* inſtead of the Jewiſh Sabbaths, and they or their immediate Succeſſors a new *Paſcha* and *Pentecoſt* (I mean our *Eaſter* and *Whitſuntide*) beſides other greater or leſſer Feaſts. And for places they made bold with the *Temple* while they were at *Jeruſalem*, and were ſuffered. And when diſpers'd, they us'd their *Synagogues*, *Oratories* and *Houſes of Prayer* where they found any; and made Churches or Meeting-Houſes where there were none. And in the times of the hotteſt Perſecutions, when Chriſtianity was a Capital Crime, and to be found at the Service of God, was the greateſt Treaſon; even then they took all opportunities

tunities to meet together, Pray and Exhort one another in the night time in Groves and Caves, and ſecret Receſſes; and ſo wou'd venture their Lives for the Service of their Redeemer. And the Man that left their Publick Times and Places of Worſhip, eſpecially in times of Peace (unleſs in caſe of Sickneſs, Journeys and the like) was look'd upon as one that had deny'd the Faith, and deſerted the Communion of the Church.

If from thoſe happy, we look down to theſe wretched times of ours, theſe times of Coldneſs, Sin and Schiſm; we ſhall yet have this comfort, that the Times and Places of Publick Duty, are continued and frequented by Piouſly-minded People to this day. Our *Lord's-days* are ſtill commanded to be Sanctified, and the Publick Service of God and the places thereof (our Pariſh Churches) frequented by thoſe few good Men that are left, and ſometimes viſited by others. And the other *Holy-days* are ſtill retain'd in the Church, and obſerv'd by thoſe that can ſpare time from their neceſſary Vocations, and are inclin'd to ſerve God. And if we look abroad into the Practice of the *Roman-Church*, which we have deſervedly forſaken, we ſhall find (what I wiſh we cou'd have brought over with us) their Zeal great, their Obligations ſtrict, and their Obedience remarkable in their attendance upon the Service of God, even to the ſhame of thoſe that pretend to be Reformed. If we obſerve the Practice of thoſe that Diſſent from our Eſtabliſhed Worſhip, and ſo have forſaken us, we ſhall yet find (and may they have their reward for it) they are Zealous for the Service of God in their way, and even tir'd out the Severity of thoſe Laws that were in force againſt them. And tho' Men mightily dif-

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fer in the manner of Divine Worſhip, yet they are all agreed in this common point; that Publick Aſſemblies are to be frequented, and that God is to be worſhipped in them. So that if there be any force from the Example of good Men in all Ages, Places and Parties (for my Chariry inclines me to think, there be many in all) if the Practice of Chriſt, his Apoſtles, and the beſt and pureſt Chriſtians of the beſt and pureſt times, can oblige us, there is a great neceſſity upon us in reſpect of our ſalvation, to come to Church and frequent the Publick Aſſemblies.

5. The fourth kind of neceſſity ariſes from the mutual want we have of thoſe things to be obtained there, and thoſe are Mercies Temporal, Spiritual and Eternal.

If we look upon our ſelves as Men ~~who~~ *wee* want our daily bread, that is all ſorts of Food and Neceſſaries, comprehended under that Principle Neceſſary called Bread. And tho' we receive theſe by the Mediation of ſecond Cauſes, and as the Iſſues of our care and labour; yet it is by the Ordination and Providence of the firſt, that *cauſes graſs to grow for the Cattle, and Herbs for the Service of Man; Wine to make glad the Heart of Man, Bread to ſtrengthen him, and Oyl to make his Face ſhine*, &c. Nay, when we have all theſe, we want Life and Motion to make uſe of them, and Appetite, Digeſtion, and the Separations neceſſary to turn them into Chile, Blood and Nutriment. We want the Divine Benediction to continue the motion of the Lungs, and the circulation of the Blood; and indeed we depend on him in the Office of every little Membrane, and every little Fibre. So that our own Body and the continuance of it

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here and its daily repairs, ſhews us a ſufficient neceſſity to worſhip God, Pray to him and Praiſe him, in order for our Temporal Happineſs. Beſides, as we are Chriſtians, and in a Moral conſideration, we want the Pardon of Multitudes of daily ſins, and God's preventing Graces againſt multitudes of daily Temptations, and deliverance from multitudes of daily dangers and Enemies Spiritual as well as Temporal. And this likewiſe brings upon us a neceſſity of a daily Worſhip, thereby putting our ſelves into his Care and Protection privately, and (as often as we can) publickly. Indeed the whole World is but an Hoſpital, and all Mankind (as well as the other Creatures) daily fed and ſupported by his Munificence. We have nothing of our own in a ſtrict ſenſe, but depend on the Alms of a higher Power and our wants, as well as our ſins, are innumerable. And 'tis but reaſonably expected we ſhou'd ask for what we want, and give thanks for what we receive. Add to this, our continuance here (notwithſtanding all our Care and the Concurrence of the Divine help) is deſign'd to be but for a ſhort time; and we muſt expect to die ſooner or later, and enter into an eternal State of Joy or Miſery; and this laſt conſideration brings on likewiſe a great neceſſity of Invocating the Divine Clemency for the Pardon of our ſins, and for thoſe Sanctifying Graces, that are neceſſary to fit and prepare us for a bleſſed (and not a miſerable) Eternity. 'Tis but reaſon we ſhou'd walk with God here, if we expect to live with him hereafter, and to have our converſation in Heaven, if we hope to have our Habitation there.

6. And

6. And now I a dare appeal to the moſt ſecure and unconcern'd Abſenter; to the moſt Prophane in his lucid Intervals, and to the Atheiſt himſelf, whether it be not a reaſonable thing for thoſe that believe a God and Providence, and depend on him for all they can hope for, whether I ſay, it be not a reaſonable thing and ſuitable to their Principles, to adore this God, and implore this Providence? Whether Chriſtians to whom God has in a more peculiar manner revealed himſelf by his Son Jeſus Chriſt, are not in a more peculiar manner oblig'd to publick acknowledgements? Chriſtians that have not only the common wants of Mankind, but have more Enemies, (and are inform'd of the deſigns of theſe Enemies) to deſtroy them! Chriſtians that are put in a more dangerous Poſt, becauſe in purſuit of a more glorious Crown than others, that have (according to their wants) greater aſſiſtances, and ſo are obliged to thankfulneſs more than others, Is it not reaſonable (I ſay) that theſe ſhou'd be more aſſiduous and punctual in their publick acknowledgments of the Divine Goodneſs than other Men, than *Jews* or *Gentiles?* Should not theſe meet with their God oftner than others where God has promiſed to meet them? (*where two or three are gathered together in my Name, there am I in the midſt of them*, Matth. 18. 20.) What then can ſuch neglect ſavour of, but plain contempt of the Deity, and an affront to our Maker for his Condeſcention, and ſo of all ſins in this reſpect, This ſeems to be the moſt exceedingly ſinful: But this will be beſt referred to the fourth Conſideration in the following Chapter.

And

And yet before I conclude this, it will be proper in this place to satisfie the Inquisitive and Conscientious Reader (who hath considered the Instances of the necessity of the Service of God before-mentioned, and shall those that follow) what the Nature of this necessity is, and in what cases the Publick Worship may be dispensed with, and what be they. To which I answer,

When I say there is a necessity of this Duty, I do not mean an absolute, but comparative necessity. We are to attend the Service of God if nothing intervene that may reasonably excuse us from it. Sickness and Inability of Body or Mind may be allow'd sufficient causes of absence, and so may self-preservation. There was an usual intermission of Publick Service in times of great Persecutions, when such Assemblies were counted Capital Offences. And this the Primitive Christians did, and by a prudent Retirement sav'd their Lives in an approaching Storm in some cases; tho' in others (as when the State of Religion requir'd they should Seal it with their Blood) they voluntarily discover'd themselves, and embrac'd a willing Martyrdom. In other cases they fled from one City to another, and worshipped God in Private when they could not in Publick. Besides, there may be extraordinary accidents that may not only excuse, but justifie our absence. Thus I may stay from Church to quench a Fire that is breaking out in a House, or stop an Inundation of Waters, or prop a falling House, or prevent any eminent Danger. The *Jewish Sabbath* it self gave way to Works of Necessity and Mercy, and so must ours, and the proper Work of it. There be likewise Works of daily necessity which are ordinary: The Provision (I mean)

of Meat and Drink. And there be Works of Charity and Mercy, Ordinary and Extraordinary to others as well as to a Mans ſelf. I will not judge a Servant that is commanded to ſtay at home to provide Meat for Man or Beaſt, nor the Phyſician that is call'd from his Prayers to viſit a dying Patient; nor the keeping Chamber on the *Lord's-day* to Bleed or take Phyſick in a ſuddain and acute Diſeaſe. God has declared, *He will have Mercy rather than Sacrifice*; and the Churches will be full, if all, but ſuch as theſe, frequented them. In a word, the accidents of Human life are many and ſurpriſing, and general Rules muſt give place to extraordinary Exceptions, and what are juſtly ſuch, every Mans Conſcience is beſt able to tell him. And therefore if there ſhould happen a neceſſity of ſtaying at home, let it be ſuch as is truly ſo, and which you may plead in juſtification of your ſelves before the Searcher of all Hearts. And remember alſo this double Caution. Firſt, to renew the attendance as ſoon as the cauſe is remov'd, and in the mean time (ſecondly) to make the Private Worſhip ſupply the intermiſſion of the Publick. And ſo much of the neceſſity of Divine Service and our attendance there, and of this Chapter.

CHAP.

CHAP VI.

The Extream ſinfulneſs of neglecting God's Worſhip demonſtrated.

CErtainly the general part of thoſe amongſt whom we live, have not the true Notion of the Nature and Neceſſity of Worſhipping of God in his Houſe, or of their great ſin in neglecting of it, when 'tis ſo common to make any (the leaſt) diverſion, a ſufficient excuſe for it. The company of a Friend, and the entertainment of the leaſt Pleaſure or Profit give (as they think) a ſufficient diſmiſſion. Moſt Men go to Church when they have nothing to hinder them, and ſtay at home when Buſineſs calls them thereunto. Few or none have ſo true a Zeal for it as the work deſerves, or conſiders the ſin in its true dimenſions. And therefore this Chapter ſhall ſhew the extream ſinfulneſs of a cauſeleſs neglect of this Duty. And this will appear, if we reflect upon our ſelves as Members of the Church of Chriſt, or as private Chriſtians. In the firſt we may conſider what injuries we do to Chriſt and his Church, by abſenting our ſelves from his Worſhip; and in the ſecond what we do to our own Souls. From both which we ſhall make an eſtimate of its extream ſinfulneſs.

1. As we are Members of the Church, our abſence from its Aſſemblies tends to its diſſolution (as we have ſeen before) and ſo we contribute

what in us lies to deprive Christ of his Kingdom, to root his Religion out of the World, and blot the Principles of it out of Remembrance. And this includes in it a double Crime, Rebellion and Murder. Rebellion against God and his Christ, and the depriving of him of his Government in the Hearts of Mankind. And this is that *Rebellion that is as the sin of Witchcraft*, as *Samuel* observes, and tends naturally to Deism or Atheism. 2dly, Murder: I do not mean that of the Body, but of the Soul, which is infinitely more precious. For 'tis in these Assemblies that the Soul is fed with the Bread of Life; its State Examin'd by the Word of God; Cured by Repentance; and the Spiritual Life advanc'd and strengthened by Devotion. And he that absents himself denies his own Soul its Spiritual Nutriment, and so starves the Heavenly Life, and deprives Christ of a Subject. He gives an ill Example to his Brother, and shou'd he be imitated by others, Christ in a short time wou'd have no Assemblies, no Servants to bear witness to his Love, and Sufferings. This thou dost (O Man) to thy Saviour who died for thee, and to thy Brother, whom thou dost endeavour to withdraw from his Allegiance; and the wrong reaches thy self also, and thy own Soul, as will appear in the second place in many particulars.

Secondly, 1. It is a sin of the deepest dye, because 'tis a violation of the Law of Nature, which is written in our Hearts. A sin of the blackest colour, because it proceeds from unthankfulness, and leads to it. Ingratitude is a Crime censur'd and condemn'd by all Men of all Ages and Nations, and a sure sign of a base unworthy

worthy Nature, and such is this. Nay, 'tis a sin against Justice, it denies God his due, which is the Tribute of thankful Lips. It is a sin against Truth, and wou'd insinuate that we receive nothing at God's Hand, when we make him no acknowledgments. Finally, 'tis an implicite denial of the Being as well as Goodness of God. To deny to own and acknowledge him when we are call'd thereunto, is (virtually at least) to deny him. And if we deny him, he will deny us even then when we shall most want him, and need to be own'd by him, at the last Judgment; even before God the Father and all the Holy Angels! And therefore this sin is very great and of fatal consequence that includes all this.

But you'll say, shall every absence from Church amount to thus much, and are there not many cases that will justifie, or at least excuse our Presence, there? Without doubt there are: but what are such have been considered before; nor will I lay a Stumbling-block in any Mans way to cause him to Despair. And yet to the first part, I must say, that every causeless and voluntary absence from the Worship of God, is no other than an unnatural piece of Ingratitude, a sin of Injustice and Falsehood, and a virtual denial of God and his Goodness, and so requires a serious Repentance and Reformation. And this cannot be better expreſt, than taking the next opportunity to confess this sin and obtain Pardon, which is soon procur'd, by the true and sincere Penitent. And I leave it to our common unconcern'd Absenters to consider, whether an absolute Stranger to their Tenets and Profession, cou'd ever gather by their Practice in this particular, that in reality they believ'd the Christian Religion, and that this Service (which is per-

form'd at Church every *Sunday*) is their returns of Thankfulneſs, and the Worſhip of the Great God they ſhou'd adore? Or whether he wou'd not wonder at their Abſence, when he came to know ſo much? Nay, I muſt referr it to the more knowing and Religious, I mean, to our better ſort of Gentlemen, *&c.* whether he wou'd not likewiſe wonder at them for being ſo indifferent in this Matter, and preferr a Viſit or a Pleaſure before it? But to return,

Thirdly, 2. It is a Sin againſt the four firſt Commandments of the *Decalogue*, which ſecures the Honour and Worſhip of the Deity. It is an effectual owning of other Gods than the true one, and preferring their Service before his. Thoſe Vile Gods, I mean Pleaſures and Profits, and Worldly concerns, Voluptuouſneſs, Idleneſs, Luxury, or Worldly Cares. Theſe and ſuch like are thy Gods, O unconcern'd Abſenter. Thou boweſt down, and Worſhippeſt things on Earth, inſtead of him that ſitteth in the Heavens, by a virtual, tho' not a formal Worſhip. Thou doſt deny him the Honour of his Name, and his Day, when thou employeſt thoſe Sacred Portions of Time to the Service of ſomething elſe. He Commands thee to Worſhip him, and ſerve him only; and ſomething elſe prevails with thee to break his Commands, and neither ſerve nor Worſhip him (at leaſt for that time) and therefore *That ſomething* is thy God that is rever'd and obey'd more than thy Maker. That is God to me, that I Love and Fear moſt, and Serve moſt, and therefore (whether I confeſs ſo much or no, yet) in reality I am its Servant. And the Abſenters God muſt needs

needs be either Covetouſneſs or Voluptuouſneſs, his Profits or his Pleaſures, or rather himſelf and his brutiſh Luſts and Appetites. This is Idolatry with a Vengeance, and beyond that of the Heathen World: They Worſhipp'd the Sun, Moon, and Stars; ſome few indeed thoſe Inferior Creatures of *Onions* and *Garlick*; and others the moſt hurtful, as *Serpents* and *Crocodiles* (or rather God in them, they were the Image, and he the *Prototype*, they were the Repreſentations of his Power, and he the ultimate Object of their Worſhip) but thou (O Chriſtian, but falſly nam'd ſo.) Thou Worſhip'ſt thine own Vices and Luſts, that many of theſe Contemn'd. They Worſhip Creatures of God's making, thou thoſe of thine own! So that I muſt conclude (and I'm ſorry that the Concluſion cannot be avoided) that the Carnal Church Abſenter is a greater Idolater than the Ancient or Modern *Pagans*, and conſequently muſt expect a hotter Hell than they.

Fourthly, 3. 'Tis a Sin againſt the Example, not only of thoſe few Good and Holy Chriſtians, but even of Heathens and Infidels. Theſe Worſhip ſomething for God, and that under the Notion of God, *The unknown God*, &c. But theſe Abſenters know the true God, and yet deny him his Service. All Mankind that acknowledge a God, acknowledge likewiſe his Worſhip. And the Carnal Abſenter has no Companion but the profeſs'd Atheiſt, and there be but few of theſe, and they will prove (I queſtion not) but very bad Company. But what if I ſhou'd ſay, that theſe are Saints in reſpect of the other? Why verily, my reaſon ſhou'd be.

this. The Atheiſt is honeſt, and acts according to his Judgment; but the Carnal Chriſtian ſays, and believes one thing and does another, and therefore is a rank Hypocrite, and ſo worſe, far worſe than the Atheiſt. Remember therefore thy name, thou cold and unconcern'd Profeſſor, and conſider what all Chriſtians (that are ſuch in reality) have done and do daily. The Primitive Saints wou'd venture Life, Eſtate, Credit, and their All to Worſhip God, tho' it was in places of Horror, and remote from Converſation; I mean in Caves, and the Sepulchres of the Martyrs, and that in times of the greateſt Danger. There they built their Churches, in the Times of Breathing, when Perſecutions ceaſed. They thought nothing too much to beautifie them, when they were permitted, that they might frequent them with Honour. They ſcorn'd to incloſe themſelves in Cedar, and let the Houſe of God lie deſolate, and even their Chappels were the beſt Rooms in their Houſes. The mighty Confluence of People to their Churches built in Remote Places over the Tombs of the Martyrs, induc'd Inhabitants to come and live near, and in time increas'd to many Houſes. Thus the Church was the Mother of the City, Town, or Village adjoyning, of which there be many Inſtances with us in *England*, as well as in other places. And this Devotion hath in ſome meaſure continued till this cold, dull, and ſtupid Age. Even Hereticks never yet ran into the Hereſie, to hold that God is not to be Worſhipped. The Papiſts have their Days and Hours of Prayer, their long Offices and Obligations to often Attendance; their Confeſſions and Penances; their Extaſies in Devotion, and their

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Mortifications out of it. And may their right Intentions commute for their Errors; tho' they reach even to that kind of Idolatry which they are charg'd with. The Diſſenters have their Meeting-Houſes, to which they Travel on the Lord's-Days and others, ſometimes many Miles thro' Heat and Cold, Storms and Rain, and yet never think themſelves weary, becauſe it is the Service of God which they perform with the greateſt Patience, Contentment, and even Joy. And this they did, even in thoſe Times when the Penal Laws were in force, and when ſharpen'd againſt them; inſomuch, that their Reſolution even blunted that ſharpneſs, and wearied their Proſecutors. And may their Zeal for God blot out the Crimes of their *Schiſm*. Thus all Men of every Religion ſeem induſtrious and careful for the Service of God, but a Company of Carnaliſts under the Name and Shadow of the Church of *England*. Good God! what makes the beſt Religion produce the worſt People! The beſt Church on Earth the worſt Members! What makes thoſe that believe the pureſt Principles, free from Superſtition on the one ſide, and Profaneneſs on the other, that teach the ſtricteſt Virtue, and the moſt profound Devotion? I ſay, what makes theſe violate the grand Fundamental of all Religion, the Worſhip of the Deity, and neglect that which even the blind *Pagans* wou'd bluſh to omit? Is it becauſe the fruitful *Egypt* is yet Untill'd, and lies Idle? or becauſe the Soil of it produces *Crocodiles*, and the Slime *Frogs*, and other noxious Vermine? Doth not the richeſt Moulds bring forth moſt Weeds, and the Sun give Life to poyſonous *Hemlock* and deadly *Nightſhade*, as well as the moſt

moſt wholſome Herb of the Field? 'Tis no diſparagement then to the Church of *England*, that ſuch Men take her Name, and ſhelter themſelves under her Wings. Men cannot live well without the pale. Religion is at leſt creditable, and that which is the Publick, has always moſt Viſitors, tho' of the worſt Men. Thus our greateſt and beſt Govern'd Cities are yet peſter'd with looſe Perſons, and *London* our *Great Metropolis* (a place of the greateſt Piety and moſt prudent Government) is a *Receptacle* for the greateſt Thieves and Robbers. But to digreſs no further. Whatſoever is the reaſon, ſo is the Fact amongſt the Vulgar. That while the Heathens make Conſcience of paying their Devotions at their Idolatrous Altars, theſe under the brighteſt Diſcoveries of Goodneſs and Mercy, are yet unconcern'd! I will add but one more Aggravation to this Sin (and I need not) when it is conſidered that it is,

Fifthly, 4. A great, if not the greateſt Injury we can do to our ſelves. We neglect our own Good, and the ſupply of our daily Wants, when we neglect God's Service. We neglect our daily Bread, and all the ſeveral Neceſſaries that are contain'd under the general Heads of Food and Rayment, becauſe we neglect to ask for them. And (let it be but duly conſidered) ſhou'd God be no more Merciful to us, than we are to our ſelves, ſhould he ceaſe to give us thoſe things which we neglect to ask at his Hands (as in Juſtice he might, and we wou'd do to one another) *Actum eſſet jampridem de genere humano*; Mankind muſt have been extinct long ſince, dy'd and pin'd away for want of their daily

daily Reparations. And here I cannot but obſerve with Sorrow, the Indiſcretion as well as Irreligion of our Vulgar Chriſtians. When God's Hand is upon them, either by Drought or Floods, when their Crops fail, or elſe an unſeaſonable Harveſt gives them any ſad Prognoſticks of an approaching Famine, when War and the Sword hangs over their Heads, or any other Calamity threatens them (tho' a kind of Cuſtom will oblige them in their ordinary Diſcourſe to uſe God's Name for help, yet) you ſhall ſeldom find that they humble themſelves, and by a ſerious Repentance ſeek his Favour. The Church ſhall be then as empty as ever; and tho' Authority take notice of the Judgment, and appoint a Faſt, yet they will hardly be perſuaded to obſerve it; and of this our late Faſts have furniſhed us with too many Inſtances.

But we are not only Cruel to our ſelves, in reſpect of our Bodies, but our Souls alſo. We want the daily Pardon of a multitude of Sins, which a Devout Application to God in his Houſe might procure. We want the aſſiſtance of the Graces neceſſary to ſupport the Spiritual Life, without which we are dead in Treſpaſſes and Sins, more to be feared than a Death in Nature; and yet we will not go to Church to ask for them. We want Protection from our Spiritual, as well as Temporal Adverſaries; and if theſe were leſs Envious or Watchful, we want a defence from the revenging Angel, and the ſtrokes of Divine Juſtice, and we will not take care to procure one. And here I cannot omit the ſignal danger *Moſes* was in for neglecting Circumciſion, a poſitive Rite, Inſtituted of God for the Sacrament of Initiation into his Church.

Church. For tho' he was call'd of God in an extraordinary manner, to an extraordinary Work, and arm'd with the Power of Miracles to perform it; and further was actually on his Journey to that purpoſe; ſo that he might have well ſuppos'd himſelf ſafe; yet the Angel (that Angel which was appointed to puniſh Neglectors of Ordinances) *met him in his Inn and wou'd have kill'd him*, had not God held his Hand, and mov'd *Zipporah* his Wife to perform what he had neglected. An Inſtance, this, at leaſt of God's Zeal for his own Inſtitutions. And we may expect the ſame for his Honour, now as well as then, for the rational Worſhip of the New Teſtament, as for that ſeemingly Cruel Sacrament of Circumciſion in the old. But God is pleas'd to be more merciful to us than he was then, and yet as ſevere. He bears with our Manners, ſometimes Threeſcore Years and Ten; but then he reſerves his Puniſhments till the laſt, and if we eſcape them in this World, we muſt expect to find them in the next. However the caſe be with us in this reſpect, we muſt expect God will ſooner or later vindicate his own Honour. And therefore we are unnatural, and the greateſt Enemies to our ſelves, by provoking him, and neglecting our own Good. And if a *Felo de ſe*, a Self-Murderer be both pitied and abhorr'd, what ſhall become of thoſe degenerate Chriſtians who do what they can (wou'd the Divine Mercy permit) by their ſlighting of God and his Worſhip, to Murder both Body and Soul here, and eternally hereafter? And thus much of the extream Sinfulneſs of this Sin.

CHAP.

CHAP. VII.

A Serious Application of the Premiſes to the Church-Abſenters.

BY this time I hope it will be confeſs'd, that the Neceſſity of Worſhipping of God in Publick is very great; and that conſequently thoſe that neglect (and much more thoſe that forſake the ſame) are guilty of all the Aggravations imaginable, which has been the Argument of the two laſt Chapters.

And now give me leave to apply my ſelf to you, O you negligent and unconcern'd Chriſtians (if you deſerve ſo good a Name) and to you eſpecially that call your ſelves *Proteſtants*, and live under the ſhadow of the *Church of England*; to lay before you the extream Evil of your cauſeleſs and unaccountable Abſence from the Worſhip of God, and to argue the Matter homely with you. This your Sin hath been prov'd to be againſt the natural Light of your Conſcience, and the Law of Nature written in every one of your Hearts, and ſo you cou'd not poſſibly be Ignorant of it. You are guilty of the blackeſt of Ingratitude, and you uſe God far otherwiſe than you wou'd be us'd your ſelves; ſhou'd any one of your Friends deal thus with you, he ſhou'd be mark'd out as the greateſt Villain on Earth. You Sin againſt God's Goodneſs, and his Mercy; and are Unjuſt as well as

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Unthankful to him. You ſeem to intimate, that there is no God at all, and yet at the ſame time are guilty of the groſſeſt Idolatry, even worſe than that of the Heathens, who ador'd the *Cats and Apes, Leeks and Onions.* All Nations, and thoſe of all Times, whether *Jews*, *Chriſtians*, or *Infidels*, will riſe up in Judgment againſt you, and the whole World condemn you. The groſs *Papiſt*, as well as the refin'd and ſcrupulous *Separatiſt*, do yet united paſs Sentence againſt you. You are neither Cold nor Hot, hardly Lukewarm, and ſo muſt expect to be rejected of God as a nauſeous thing with the unfortunate *Laodicea.* You have only a Name that you live the Life of Faith, the Ancient and Holy Name of Chriſtians, and the later appropriate Name of *Proteſtants*; and yet alas, there is little but a Name in you. You wou'd fain be thought to live, but are indeed dead, dead and corrupt Members of an excellent Church, which you diſgrace by your Unconcernedneſs and Carnality. Your Holy Religion, and your own Profeſſion upbraid you. Your own Zeal againſt Popery, and your diſlike of the ſqueamiſh Diſſenters will be objected to you. The firſt moves your Anger, and the other your Laughter. The one is call'd an Idolater, and the other an Hypocrite, and yet both theſe will appear better than you in the Day of Judgment; and muſt *Enter into the Kingdom of Heaven before you.* Nay, your very ſelves, and your own daily Wants will at laſt become your Accuſers. God hath plentifully provided for your Body, unask'd, and wou'd as plentifully ſupply the Wants of your Souls, but you will not uſe thoſe Gifts that you have, or ask for thoſe you Want.

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You will neither desire what is wanting, nor give him thanks for what you have. You do not desire to learn the knowledge of his Laws, or to search into your own Condition. You are sunk down into Carelesness and Stupidity; and Heaven and Hell are not worthy your Enquiry. In a word, God and Man is willing to make you happy but you (foolish and ungrateful) will not consent to be so. All this is manifested by your forsaking, or at least not frequenting of the Sacred Assemblies. And what can you say now in excuse for your selves.

First, 1. Is the Duty any way unreasonable in it self? No certainly. 'Tis but a reasonable thing that a Creator should be Worshipped, and a Redeemer own'd as such. Nor is there any reason why we shou'd daily receive good things at God's Hand, and yet not confess that we do so. I'm sure, we expect so much from them to whom we are Benefactors, in very small Circumstances. But, O merciful God, do not those daily Favours that thou bestowest on us, O Jesu, do not all the Sorrows that thou sufferest for us, deserve at least acknowledgments! And yet that which is requir'd of us is no more than this: *What shall I render unto the Lord for all the Benefits that he hath bestowed upon me? Why? I will take the Cup of Salvation, and call on the Name of the Lord. I will pay my Vows in the Lord's Courts, in the presence of his People.*

Secondly, 2. Is the time of this Duty any way inconvenient or grievous? No. The time of Publick Worship (as Obligatory to all Christians) is usually but one Day in Seven, and about three

three Hours of that Day. And tho' God requir'd from the *Jews* (and in proportion now of us Chriſtians) the ſeventh part of their Time, yet his Publick Service takes up but the eighth part of that Day. Moſt of the reſt we uſually beſtow upon our ſelves for Sleep and Refreſhment, tho' God may well, and doth aſſuredly require part of that too for our Religious Meditations and Devotions. So that upon the whole, the Service of God in his Houſe, is but the eighth part of every ſeventh Day, that is, but one part in fifty ſix of our Time; and how poor and inconſiderable a thing is this. We make no ſcruple to beſtow one third part of our Time on Sleep, and two third parts more on neceſſary Employments, upon our Pleaſures, and perhaps upon our Vices; and ſhall we grudge the fifty ſixth part to Gratitude, Juſtice, and Truth, to the acknowledgment of the Merits of our dear Redeemer, and for the continuance of the future Mercies we want?

Thirdly, 3. Is the place ſo remote that you cannot Travel ſo far? No. The Houſe of Prayer is uſually within a ſmall diſtance, and the nearer it is, ſometimes the leſs frequented. Every Pariſh hath at leaſt one, and ſometimes more; and the diſtance from every Man's Dwelling is generally very inconſiderable. And yet if it were ſome Miles, why ſhou'd not Man wait upon his God, and think much to Travel when he Commands? Sure I am *Abraham* thought not much to forſake his Father's Houſe, his Kindred, and his Country, and follow God into a ſtrange Land. And further, every Male *Jew* was bound three times in every Year to go up

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to *Jeruſalem* and Worſhip, and not one of them to appear empty handed, but to preſent God and his Prieſt with more or leſs. And if God ſhou'd Command one half of this Nation to appear Perſonally three times in a Year, at the *Cathedral of St. Paul's in London*, and every one to bring ſome Gift to it, it were the ſame thing, and no mighty Matter, when we remember that our Pride or Revenge calls many of us in proper Perſon, and our Purſes too to *Weſtminſter*---four times every Year, to our great Charge, and ſometimes undoing. And our other concerns, ſome of us, every Week, to ſome part of that Great City.-----But the Caſe is quite otherwiſe with us in the concern of this part of Religion. The Word and Worſhip of God is not far off, or beyond the Seas; not at our *Great Metropolis* only, but near us, even in our own Precincts and Pariſhes, and at our own Doors, where our other occaſions daily command us. And yet we ſee the Diſſenters every Week take a longer Journey, without any grudging!

Fourthly, 4. Is it any Charge to you? Not one Farthing. 'Tis a place of no Expence, unleſs Charity procures any thing of you there; and that is in your own Power, and you may chuſe to give it away. Nay, 'tis a place to ſave Money in (whilſt moſt other places are Expenſive) where alſo you may learn Sobriety, Temperance, and Frugality, and to conquer your chargeable Vices. And indeed, Religion at preſent (as things are now ordered) is no Charge to us. The Clergy's Eſtates are ſet out in Tythes (more or leſs, great or ſmall) and theſe Tythes were made a diſtinct Eſtate, appropriate to

 them,

them, even from the beginning of private Tenures; even from the time that the Lands of *England* were all the King's *Demeans*, and not divided to their Subjects. And the Clergy's Right is antecedent, and more ancient than the preſent Proprietors. And therefore when any Land becomes Tythe-Free (as a great deal became in the Diſſolution of Abbies in the Days of *Henry* VIII.) it becomes ſo much dearer than other Lands; and ſo wou'd any Beaſt, if it cou'd be ſo Privileg'd. The Proprietor of Land charg'd with Tythe, bought it with that Incumbrance, as his Predeceſſors (even up to the firſt Proprietor) firſt had it convey'd to them. And if we had not the Tythe, ſomebody elſe wou'd, who cou'd purchaſe it. So that the Pariſhioner doth indeed pay nothing for his Religion, nor to his Miniſter, unleſs it be any private Gifts (which is in his own Power) and his Offerings which (God knows) are ſhrunk to nothing. And he that objects to his Paſtor, that he keeps him and his Family, ſpeaks falſly as well as fooliſhly. This I note to ſtop the mouth of Covetouſneſs, mixt with a kind of Atheiſin, which wou'd fain perſuade the Covetous Peaſant, that it wou'd be a better World with him, if the Churches were down to mend his High-Ways; for then his Tythes wou'd go down likewiſe, and he wou'd labour no longer for an Idle Parſon, whom he thinks not neceſſary. Were theſe in the Diſſenters Circumſtances, they might have ſome colour to Complain, who pay their Tythes, and maintain their own Teachers beſide, and bear all the other the Charge of their Religion, ordinary and extraordinary. But all Sects are kind to their

Teach-

Teachers, but thoſe who are indeed of no Religion. But I have digreſſed, and therefore to return to theſe our lazie and unconcern'd Abſenters. What is it now that hinders you from coming to the Houſe of God? Is it

Fifthly, 5. Want of Health? Why, in that caſe God and Man will Excuſe you. For neither expects you ſhould damnifie your ſelves in that reſpect by coming; but then I hope you will come as ſoon as you are able, and that is enough. But alas! this is uſually but a pretence. You will venture abroad on your Worldly Concerns, and fear a Cold no where but at Church. What is this but to prevaricate, and that with the Searcher of all Hearts? Laſtly, Is this any real Profit to us, or can we have any Deſign in our Zeal to bring you to the Houſe of Prayer? No, we have no Profit in your appearance there; 'tis no advantage to us, but only to you. We ſhall have what the Law hath left to us, if you ſtay at home, and the Abſenter pays his Tythe as well as the Zealous Worſhipper of God. And your appearance at Divine Service can bring us no Worldly Profit, but our Satisfaction, and an encreaſe of our Studies and Diligence; while we have the Contentment to find a full and ſerious Auditory: Whereas 'tis ſmall Encouragement to Pray with empty Seats, or Preach to the Walls. Otherwiſe it is not our Intereſt to multiply Auditors, and draw Strangers to us. We get nothing by them, and therefore let them keep to their own Churches. Indeed, the Teachers of the Separate Meetings find it their Intereſt to augment their Congregations, and *will compaſs Sea and Land to make Proſelytes*, by

which their Credit and their Salary is increaſed. For I do not find that any of them preach the Goſpel ſo freely, but that they receive the Benevolences of their Auditors, and without doubt expect it likewiſe. And I beg their Pardon, if I ſay, that ſomething like this continues the Separation, eſpecially amongſt thoſe that can occaſionally Communicate with us, as ſome of the *Presbyterians* do. But be this as it will, we have no other reaſon to be thus Importunate with you to frequent the Publick Worſhip, but the Salvation of your Souls. This is only our Intereſt, and 'tis alſo your own, *and we ſeek not yours but you*, and that for no advantage of ours, but for your own.

Come therefore (O ye deluded to your own Diſtruction, thus ungrateful to God, and unkind to your ſelves) Come, I ſay, at the Call of God, and the Sound of the Bell, to God's Houſe, and to the Houſe of Prayer. And do not think to excuſe your ſelves with theſe, or ſuch like ſilly Pretences. Say not to your ſelves,

1. 'Tis a ſmall Matter. Why, 'tis a matter of the greateſt concern imaginable. The giving thanks for thoſe Mercies received, and the obtaining of thoſe we want, and theſe are almoſt Infinite. Heaven and Earth, Time and Eternity both depend upon it; and therefore can this be ſo ſmall a matter! Say not

2. 'Tis deſign'd for thoſe that are Learned, or at Leiſure, or Inquiſitive, *&c.* Every Man has a God that he ſhou'd Own, Fear, Love, and Honour; and a Soul to be Sav'd or Damn'd at the Great Day. And for Learning, Religion is de-

deſign'd for the Ignorant, as well as the Learned; and God call'd in the Infancy of his Church, *not many Wiſe, not many Learned*; but ſome unlearned and obſcure, that he might ſhew his Mighty Power, in making both Learned and Wiſe by his Infuſed Gifts. He is Learned enough that is Learned unto Salvation, and a ſmall endeavour (with an honeſt Heart, together with frequenting of his Service) will make a Man ſo. And then for Curioſity (which ſome make to be the only Spur to Religion) 'tis but Reaſon ſure, that every Man ſhould (with the Ruler in the Goſpel) enquire after the way to Salvation. I find that every Man is careful in Matters of this World, and the Concerns of his Body; and I ſee no reaſon but that he ſhou'd be more ſollicitous for thoſe of the other World, to which he is haſtening, and thoſe of his Soul. And then laſtly for Leiſure, tho' ſome have more of it than others, yet every Man may have enough. Time lies upon every Man's Hands, and the Day-Labourer hath more than he uſes rightly. However, it is every Man's Duty to make a Leiſure for the attainment of that which is thus neceſſary. The times of Eating and Drinking, and other Refreſhments for the Body, are ſeparated by every Man from his other Minutes, and ſo ought to be thoſe for the good of his Soul. And he that doth this, ſhall find that he hath ſtill enough. Say not

3. I will ſerve my Occaſions with this Opportunity, and take the next; and tho' I am otherwiſe employ'd this Lord's-Day, I will ſpend the next in its proper Work. Why, who can promiſe himſelf another Lord's-Day yet to come?

Who can assure himself of futurity? Thy Time may be past before that is present, and the Bell that calls thee now to Church, may before that day ring out thy Knell! 'Tis yet a warning, but it may prove ere that time, thy Passing-Bell. Who can tell whether God will not say to thee as he did to the rich Projecter in the Gospel, *Thou fool, this night shall they require thy Soul of thee.* But if thou wert secure of future time (which yet thou canst never be) and that thou shalt live to see another Lord's-day: Yet there be a great many other contingencies that must be secur'd likewise. For there may be other business fall out again upon that day, altogether as importunate; or thou mayest be sick, or perhaps the Service may be intermitted; or who knows whether God will hear thee at thy time, when thou hast neglected his? Or whether God will give thee Grace to seek him when thou comest there? Or finally, whether the Devil and the World may not break in upon thee the next time, as they have done this? These are weighty Considerations, and worthy thy thoughts when thou art tempted to an omission. And say not,

4. I can as well employ my self at home in my Private Devotions: I cannot believe that any Man that stays at home, without a warrantable cause, can be Devout there: For if he were, sure I am, he wou'd stay there with the greatest reluctance. For the same Principle that carries him into his Closet to his Prayers, wou'd carry him to Church more forceably. However, this we know, that God will be confess'd before Men, and that Publick Devotions exceed the Private, as far as the light of the Sun doth that of a Candle.

dle. And that they that are conſtant to the Private, will be ſo to the Publick; and therefore the former can be no hindrance to the latter, when it can be had. And if it can be ſuppos'd that any Man cou'd be Devout in his Cloſet, and yet wilfully neglect the Publick Service of God, which can never be; yet even in that caſe it ought to be conſidered.

1. That this is the way to rob God of his Publick Homage and Honour which he values above all things, and will not part with to another. And this is a Debt that the Law of Nature as well as Chriſtian Religion exacts of us. 2ly 'Tis the way to make all Men moſt abominably ungrateful and unthankful (in reſpect of the Publick I mean) for all his benefits. Nay, (3dly) 'Tis the way to blot the Notion of God out of the World, and make us forget his very Being, which cou'd never be remembred by ſome cold Devotion whiſpered in Private. It wou'd not only diſſolve the Church but diſſolve all Religion, the Foot-ſteps and Signatures of the Deity on our Souls, which are hardly preſerv'd with all our daily and publick acknowledgments. And then (4thly) In vain did the Divine Wiſdom inſtitute Feaſts, Faſts, and Solemn Aſſemblies of Mankind in the *Old Teſtament*, to Celebrate his Praiſes, or the *Lord's-day* and other Solemn Meetings in the *New*, if it were ſufficient to ſtay at home and think or mumble out a few *Oraiſons* in a Corner. For this Principle would make all Publick Worſhip Unneceſſary and Hypocritical, lay all in common, and deſtroy that frame of Religion that God hath built.

To object our Saviour's words, *Matth. 6. 6. (When thou Prayeſt, enter into thy Cloſet and ſhut the door to thee,* &c.) againſt our Publick Duty is the height of Perverſeneſs as well as Folly. For who knows not that our Lord ſpeaks here of Private Prayer, and that in oppoſition to Phariſaical Hypocriſie. Theſe made their Private and Solitary Devotions in Publick Places, in the corners of the ſtreets to be ſeen of Men. A piece of vain Glory this, not to be parrallel'd, but by thoſe that ſcream or hollow out their Chamber-Prayers, that the whole Neighbourhood may hear and take notice of them. In this caſe ſaith our Saviour, *Go into thy Cloſet and ſhut the door, and there pray to thy Father in ſecret* as thou pretendeſt. This is nothing to forbid or undervalue the neceſſity of our Publick and United Addreſſes to God, no more than Private Alms done in ſecret ſhould ſupercede the Publick deeds of Charity.

And here I cannot but remember with concern, that I have heard ſome ſatisfie their own Conſciences, and endeavour to excuſe themſelves to thoſe that reproved their neglect of this Duty, by ſaying that they cou'd read as good a Sermon at home as they hear at Church, *&c.* But this is anſwerable to the Piety of theſe times, which dotes on nothing but Sermons, and thinks there's nothing to be done at Church but haranging and hearing. And if this were true, the pretence had ſomething in it of excuſe. but this is a meer Blind of the Devils raiſing, to hide the more excellent and precious part of our Duty from our Eyes. That part I mean, which conſiſts in adoring our Great Creator and Preſerver, and Jeſus our Redeemer, who hath taken away the ſins of the World. When we Celebrate the common

Praiſes

Praiſes of the Holy Trinity, and of each Perſon in particular, and make our Common Supplications to the Eternal Being for what we want. This is indeed to do the Work of Heaven, of Saints and Angels. This is the great work of the day and place. As for Preaching, it has its uſe and ſecondary place, but is not abſolutely neceſſary to Divine Worſhip—— But to return to my Abſenter, and my Expoſtulations with him. Say not,

5. The Miniſter is mine Enemy, and there hath been differences betwixt us and Injuries received and given, and therefore I will never hear him again. I have known ſome forſwear the Church in ſuch a fit of Paſſion, and too carefully keep their Oaths. But in this caſe it wou'd be fit, calmly to weigh the thing, which we cannot do without putting our ſelves into a State of Neutrality, or rather (becauſe this is hard to be done) to refer the difference to ſome Prudent diſintereſted perſons to make it up. Who knows but that the Complainant may be in the fault himſelf. 'Tis abſolutely neceſſary that the quarrel ſhou'd be taken up, and 'tis great Charity to contribute to it. However (O querelous Abſenter) this is no ſufficient excuſe to thee, he is ſtill thy *Paſtor*, and thou art put under his Care, and therefore by ſome means or other procure a Reconciliation, for there muſt be a Converſe betwixt you. Thou muſt meet him as the Miniſter of God, tho' not as thy particular Friend, and let not thy fooliſh, raſh and wicked Oath hinder thee. 'Twas the Devil that firſt put thee upon the Swearing, and then on the Obſerving that injurious Oath. 'Tis an Oath againſt God and thine own Soul, and

'tis

'tis thy preſent and future Intereſt to repent of it as an unlawful Act: For thou art in the State of Damnation whilſt thou keepeſt it. Say not,

6. That thy pariſh Prieſt is dull and ungifted, that he doth not Preach to Edification, *&c.* Why, he is able to offer up the common wants of his Pariſhioners in the common Prayers of the Church readily. He reads the Word of God diſtinctly, and Expounds it plainly, and in words ſuitable to the Vulgar Capacities. 'Tis true, he doth not Cry out, Rave, or Act a ſeeming Paſſion: He doth not break out into Thunder and Lightning on a ſudden, but his Voice is low, ſtill and moderate. He doth not Cant (as 'tis uſually term'd) and uſe ſet Phraſes and ſtrange Expreſſions. A Wiſe Man muſt like him the better for all this, and if thou doſt not, 'tis becauſe thou art mov'd by ſomething elſe than Reaſon. God is not in the ſtrong Winds, Fires and Earthquakes of Paſſion, but in the ſtill Voice of Reaſon. As for want of Edification, 'tis a Phraſe for Humour, Curioſity, or Phancy. Firſt, live up to his Doctrine, and perform all that he Teaches, and if there be any thing neceſſary to Salvation that he teaches not, then (and not before) leave him. Say not,

Laſtly, That he is a bad Liver, and of Scandalous Converſation, and therefore thou wilt not hear him. Enquire firſt, whether this be not a Scandal caſt upon him by Atheiſts, Deiſts, or ſome of the Diſſenters, who all for different deſigns, love to blacken a Miniſter of the Church of *England*: Enquire whether it be a ſin indeed, or an Innocent Liberty aggravated into a Crime by falſe Repreſentations. If it be a ſin indeed, then

conſider

conſider whether it was a Surprize, or a cuſtomary habit. If the firſt, 'tis but an imperfection incident to Human Nature, and he himſelf will beware of a ſecond failure. If it be of a habitual Vice he is guilty of, then get ſome Friend to repreſent the matter to him privately and calmly, before publick Accuſation, and apply our Saviour's Rule in caſe of Offences, *Matth.* 18. 15. However the caſe ſhould be, remember ſtill that he is a Man as thou art, and ſubject to Paſſions and Appetites, and that *in many things we offend all.* That he muſt give an account to his own Maſter in Heaven, and to his Superiors here on Earth. That thou art not to intermit thy Duty becauſe he doth his. And finally, that he is ſtill thy Spiritual Father, tho' a Sinner, and that thou ought'ſt to obey his Righteous Admonitions and Doctrines, tho' not follow his Example. *The Scribes and Phariſees ſit in* Moſes *Seat, whatſoever therefore they bid you obſerve and do, that obſerve and do, but do not after their works, for they ſay and do not,* Matth. 23. 2, 3.

But theſe laſt are generally ſhams and pretences uſed by evil Men to palliate their ſinful abſence from the Houſe of Prayer. They are Figg leaves to hide their Spiritual Nakedneſs. They are not the true cauſes of abſenting from the Church of God. The cauſe lies generally in the Abſenters themſelves, and not in the Miniſters. And therefore for once be ingenuous (O negligent Chriſtian) and confeſs the Truth. Say that the true cauſe of this careleſſneſs and neglect, is a ſenſeleſſneſs in Religion. A Carnal, Senſual and Earthly Mind. Thou art not warm'd with the Love of God, nor doſt fear him as thou oughteſt. Thou art not mov'd by the promiſes of Heaven, nor at

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all concern'd at the punishments of Hell. The Joys of one, nor the Torments of the other, do not any ways affect thee. Thou art sunk down into the present Enjoyments, the delights or profits of this Life, and these have quite captivated thy Rational Faculties. Thou art fixt to this World, and hast no notion of another. Thou hast (besides this) a secret Inclination to Atheism, and a willingness of Mind to have no God at all. Thou wilt not go to Church, because thou hast no desire to be put in mind of him, of his Will and thy Duty. Besides, thou art not willing to search into the State of thine own Soul, to see how matters stand betwixt God and thy self; and the Preacher may possibly disturb thee by urging an Inquisition. In fine, thou desirest to know no more, and puttest all to a venture. If there be a God, he is merciful and cannot expect so much from such unlearned, such (otherwise) employed Creatures as thou art. 'Tis a troublesom thing to begin and go through with the work of Religion. Thou art resolv'd therefore not to trouble thy self with such Niceties, but stay at home and run the hazard. It can happen no worse to thee than to thousands.

That these and such like are the true causes of most Mens absence from the House of Prayer is very probable, and I dare appeal to every Mans private Thoughts if there be not something like this at the bottom. See then where thy neglect centers, upon Carnal Security, acquiescence in Sin hardness of heart, final impenitency and a kind of Atheism. This is thy condition and no better, and therefore open thine Eyes and consider it before it be too late. Read and consider the Threatnings of abused Wisdom (*Prov.* 1. 24. and so to the

the end of the Chapter) and remember that Life is posting away, and Death comes on with speed, and we know not how near he is. And then a days Service in the House of God will be more comfort, than a thousand spent in the Service of the Body. Then possibly thou mayest bewail thy neglect, and desire Repentance and Reconciliation, when it is too late, and when neither thy Health, Understanding or other Circumstances can enable thee to begin that great work. If all this will not do, I must write a *Domine Miserere*, *Lord have mercy upon thee*, on thy door. Thou art in a desperate condition and almost past cure. And if thou neglectest thy self long, thou wilt be consign'd to destruction. And thy Condemnation must be the greater, because thy opportunities were great. *This is the Condemnation*, that is, (the cause and aggravation of your punishment) *that Light is come into the World* (by Christ, and is offered to your Service by his Ministers) *and you are in love with darkness because your deeds are evil.*

CHAP. VIII.

Of our Duty in bringing others to Church, and to other parts of Religion.

HAving thus attach'd our Church-Abſenter on all ſides, and taken away all his Excuſes, I ſhall humbly expect his Conviction, and ſelf-condemnation, and conſequently his Repentance and Reſolutions of Amendment. And now I muſt apply my ſelf to him with the ſame ſerioufneſs and importunity for the good of his Neighbours and others amongſt whom he lives. *When thou art converted thy ſelf* (ſaith our Lord to St. *Peter*) *ſtrengthen thy Brethren.* 'Tis a brave and generous thing to reſcue a Soul Captivated by the Devil, and reſtore a Rebel to God, to his former Allegiance. *He that converteth a ſinner from the evil of his way, ſhall ſave a Soul from death and hide a multitude of ſins.* God muſt needs take it kindly at his hands, who not only comes in himſelf, but brings in his Neighbour with him. And if coming to the Publick Aſſembly be to own God and ſerve him, it will ſure be acceptable to him to gain as many as we can to joyn with us in the ſame Service. Seeing therefore that the World in general is ſo negligent and remiſs in this Duty, which is the Original of all Religion, I ſhall here entreat the Reader (that is in any meaſure convinc'd of his ſinful neglect by theſe or any other arguments) to endeavour to convince others alſo. Let him

him communicate his Conviction with the Reasons of the same, and reclaim both by persuasions and example, his negligent Neighbours to the House of Prayer. To this he is bound by his Duty to God and common Charity to the Souls of Men and among these his Relations and Dependants and his Children and Servants in particular deserve his utmost care and endeavours. And for this reason I shall apply my self in the rest of this Chapter to *Parents* and *Masters*, especially that they would not only give a good Example themselves, but interpose their Authority on God's behalf, and resolve with *Joshuah*, *that they and their Houses shall serve the Lord.*

2. First, then for Parents, we all know that Children and Posterity are parts of our selves. Their Bodies proceed from ours. They were originally in our Loyns, and of the same Being with us. And tho' their Souls are deservedly believed to be of another Original, yet we see by Experience what Power the Body we traduce to them hath over it. We see how it forms the Passions, Affections, Inclinations, Dispositions and Habits of the whole Man; and how generally the manners of the Mind follow the Temperament of the Body. We propagate our selves to our Children, and usually the worst of our selves, our Imperfections and our Vices. And therefore there is all the Reason in the World that we should endeavour to rectifie in them what we have delivered over to them amiss, and to make strait their and our own Crookedness, and to form those Minds in Virtue and the fear of God, which derive their Deformity from our selves.

3. This

3. This is much in our power to do, when they are young, tender, and reducible to any form. There is no Nature ſo Crooked and Perverſe, ſo Brutiſh and Untractable, but that is capable of Reduction and Reformation, if the Parents do their Duty at firſt, during their Non-age, and the Perſons themſelves purſue the ſame when they come to years of Reaſon and Underſtanding. *Socrates* accus'd of a very ill Phyſnomy, confeſs'd his Nature was accordingly, but ſaid he had rectified it by Philoſophy. I'm confident all Men miſcarry firſt by their Parents neglect, and then by their own; for if the Parents do not begin the Work, the Children ſeldom do. I am afraid therefore that at the day of Judgment we ſhall have Millions of Crimes to anſwer for, more than we have actually committed, and ſuch that we can have no knowledge of, and ſo cannot repent of; I mean the ſins of our Deſcendants, which we might have poſſibly prevented by a Chriſtian Education in our Children. And then we ſhall have reaſon to count Barrenneſs a ſignal Bleſſing, and have cauſe to ſay, *Bleſſed is the Womb that never bare, and the Paps that never gave ſuck.* This is a weighty Conſideration, and worthy of our firſt thoughts; for 'tis too certain, that if our Children are damned for want of Education and Inſtructions, God will require their Souls at our Hands, and why not alſo the Souls of their Poſterity who might not have miſcarried, if we had done our Duty. It was a grievous Mortification to good old *Eli* to hear of the Judgments that were to befall his Houſe in future Generations, and to conſider withal, that he himſelf was the cauſe of all for want of the timely Reformation of his

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two Sons *Hophni* and *Phinehas*; but moſt of all becauſe this time of Reformation was now long paſt, both of 'em were now grown Men and vicious; and incorrigible beyond retrieve. 'Twas this broke the Heart of the Good Man, and enfeebled him ſo far, that he cou'd not ſurvive the fatal News, of which his former Tenderneſs to his Children were more than preſumptive cauſes.

4. As therefore a Religious Formation of the Mind is neceſſary above all things, ſo the firſt thing in that work, muſt be to teach our Children to know God to be our Creator and Preſerver, and the Giver of all they enjoy. That they ought therefore come to him, and Worſhip him, as to a Rewarder of all thoſe that dilligently ſeek him. That he is to be found in his Ordinances, and at Church, where he has promiſed to be preſent; and conſequently 'tis their Duty daily to attend him there. This is the Foundation of a Religious Education, nor is it poſſible to be begun without it. The firſt thing is to offer up our Children to God in Baptiſm, and make him a Preſent of them. Then too, as ſoon as poſſible, to have them inſtructed in their Baptiſmal Vow, and taught the Fear of the Lord. What God hath done for their Bodies and Souls, and what he requires in conſequence thereof. They are to be taught betimes the time, place, and manner of making their Supplications before him; their Obligations to Gratitude, and conſequently to frequent the Aſſemblies and Hours of Prayer.

5. But while I ſpeak of that Duty which Nature, as well as Religion, lays upon us in beha'f of our Children, in what words ſhall I relate and

(at the ſame time) bewail our neglect of it. We take care for their Bodies, we nouriſh them and bring them up, in ſome way of living; We Purchaſe Eſtates for 'em, or Settle them in ſome Trade, that they may (if it be not their own fault) live when we are gone hence. And ſo do they to their Children, and ſo downwards. And ſo doth, or ought every Man to do, that is not an Infidel. What then do we neglect? Why, not their Bodies, but their Immortal Souls: Not their Temporal, but their Spiritual Advantages: Not this World, but their Heaven and Immortality. We provide for this Life, but not for the next; for Eſtates here, but not hereafter.

This is a heavy Charge, and I wiſh it was not to be made out againſt moſt Parents, who contribute nothing to their Childrens Chriſtianity, but the outward Ceremony of Baptiſm. The Outward and Ceremonious part, I ſay, but not the Inward, *The Anſwer of a good Conſcience towards God*; and this Outward part only in compliance to Cuſtom and Decency. Beyond this they enquire after nothing, nor reach at more. They are negligent and unconcern'd as their *Sureties*. The work is done, and they think the Care is over. They take no Care to Inſtruct them in their Baptiſmal Vow and Duty; in their Catechiſm or Religion; nor call upon them to go to Church and hear Sermons. Wonder not that I inſiſt ſo much on this Duty: 'Tis the Introduction and Door to all the reſt. Children even in the firſt dawn of Reaſon will be apt to enquire, with thoſe of the ancient *Jews*, *What mean you by this Service?* What is the reaſon of our going to Church? And who is this God we addreſs to? And the Reaſons of it will appear

appear by the thing it ſelf, and be inculcated with the firſt Knowledge of words, and by the Service when they underſtand it. Beſides all Sermons tend to this end; and he that hearkens to them as he ought, cannot be an ignorant Man, a bad Chriſtian, or a vicious Perſon. 'Tis then the want of this, that ſo many thouſands periſh; and thoſe Parents occaſion it that keep not their Children to the Publick Service, while they are under their Eyes and Power, as well as thoſe that actually encourage them in Vice, by Precept or Example. From this it is, that they paſs over their Youth in the Ignorance of God, till they Marry and ſettle themſelves in the World, and their Minds on Worldly Cares; and then 'tis thought too late to learn theſe things. And if they have no poſitive habits of Wickedneſs, when they come to Manhood, they have yet that invincible Ignorance of Mind in things of Religion, and live accordingly wthout God in the World, and ſo proceed to bring up their Children, and ſo on to future Generations. The reaſon of all which, is the neglect of their Predeceſſors.

6. But I need not ſpend words on ſo plain a caſe, every Man will acknowledge the Parents Obligations for the due Education of their Children, and particularly in the Worſhip of God. But Maſters and Miſtreſſes for the moſt part, I fear, think themſelves under no ſuch Obligations. They look that their Servants ſhould perform their years ſervice, and as for ſerving of God, or coming to Church, they are as unconcern'd in it as they are in other parts of a Religious Life. 'Tis true many will not ſuffer them to be Scandalouſly wicked, and upon repeated Acts of

of uncreditable Vices, will expel them their Houſes becauſe theſe have an ill aſpect upon themſelves, their Credits and Eſtates, and the Scandals of the Servants reflect in ſome meaſure upon the Governours of the Family. But as to the Ordinances of Salvation, the Publick Prayers and the Sacraments, it is uſually thought an Invaſion of their Liberties to engage them to them. And in reſpect of theſe, I ſhall be bold to aſſert, that the Souls as well as Bodies of Mens Servants during the time of their Service, ought to be taken care of by their reſpective Superiours. Of *Abraham* God gives Teſtimony, *Gen.* 18. 14. *That he knew that he would command not only his Children, but his Houſhold to do Judgment and Juſtice*; and *Joſh.* 24. 15. *Joſhua* engag'd not only for himſelf, but for his Family that *they ſhould ſerve the Lord.* Pſal. 101. *David* reſolv'd to keep only Righteous Servants, and to expel the wicked Perſon out of his Houſe: And as ſoon as the *Jaylor* was Converted himſelf, the reſt of his Houſe ſubmitted and was Baptized, and hence it is, that we read in the Epiſtles of the *Little Churches* that were in ſeveral of the *Converts* Houſes.

7. Beſides, it is more Generous to ſave the Soul than the Body, even of a Stranger as well as a Friend; and we ſhould be ſedulous to bring every Man to Heaven. He that truly loves God, will not endure to harbour any Man that robs him of his Honour, for we wou'd not willingly entertain a Traytor to our Prince. 'Tis true, Servants of old, had more dependance on their Maſters than thoſe of this Age, and Nation; were many of them Slaves, they and their Wives and Children; But wou'd Maſters even with us, exert their

their lawful Power, uſe their Authority for God, and thruſt the refractory Perſon out of doors, or compel him to outward Religion; it wou'd cauſe a great Reformation amongſt Servants: For tho' they cou'd not enter into their Hearts, and ſettle ſincere and internal Piety there: yet they might eaſily command outward attendance upon God, and ſecure his Honour as far as it can be expected. And who knows but the uſe of the outward Ordinances might work upon the Heart; and Preaching and Prayer have the expected effect on the Souls of thoſe that were obliged to be preſent? I ſhould therefore humbly entreat all Governors of Families to do what in them lies for the Salvation of their Dependants, and to remember that they are to give an account not only for their own Souls, but for thoſe that are but temporally committed to their charge. To engage them at their hiring to come to Church, or elſe to have nothing to do with them, and then to ſee, that they perform the Conditions of their Bargain. If this were done, there might be many a Poor Ignorant Perſon inſtructed in Religion, and their want of Education ſupplied; ſo that when they come to Marry and have Children, they might know how to bring them up in the fear of God, which themſelves never learnt at home of their own Parents. Let the memory of ſuch Charitable Governours of Families be bleſſed here on Earth, as they will be in Heaven, where they will have their Reward Eternally, whilſt their Works follow them.

8. I will not purſue this Head of Diſcourſe any further, becauſe it ſeems to be ſomething forreign to my firſt Deſign, and a Digreſſion. I

will therefore conclude what I have to ſay further, with refections on that remarkable Parable, or (as ſome think it) Hiſtory, *Luke* 16. We find there, that the Condemn'd *Dives* (as we uſually call him) was very importunate with Father *Abraham*, that (ſeeing there was no hopes for himſelf ever to be delivered from thoſe Flames) he would ſend *Lazarus* from the State of the Dead to his five Brethren ſtill on Earth, to admoniſh them, and prevent their coming thither. Whence was this mighty care of a hopeleſs Wretch? Was it from the remainders of that natural Love and Affection he carry'd hence? " Surely then, O Charity, thy Empire is large, " when it reaches even to the Damned, and en- " flames thoſe that are in Hell! It ſeems then that " tho' (which is to be lamented) thou haſt almoſt " left Earth and the Company of Mortals, yet " thy Kingdom is not leſſened. And thou not " only reigneſt in Heaven among the Saints, but " alſo in ſome meaſure amongſt the Damned. *Dives* was concern'd for the Souls of his Brethren, and yet we are unconcern'd for our neareſt and deareſt Relations, for our Sons and Daughters! Tho' we ſhou'd be alike careful of every Man's eternal Welfare, for we are all Brethren. Let then ſuch negligent Parents know, that their Eyes ſhall be at laſt opened, if not on Earth, yet (when it is too late) in Hell; if Earth will not, yet Hell ſhall awake their Charity.—— But after all, perhaps 'twas not his Love to them, but to himſelf, and his fear of an augmentation of Torments that made him, (if poſſible) keep them from that place of Horror. His five Brethren's acceſs wou'd have been an addition to his pains, which might have been redoubled on him, who

(per-

(perhaps) was their Seducer: For as the Happineſs of the Bleſſed, ſo the Sorrows of the Damned are increaſed by Company, eſpecially upon the Tempter, by the Company of thoſe that were tempted by him. *Dives* was afraid of an addition of Torments by their Advent: And if ſo, how much more miſerable wou'd the Condemned Wretch have been, by the acceſſion of his Children. Who cou'd have expreſs'd his Fury and the height of his Torments, when the Fruit of his Body, his deareſt Sons and Daughters (damn'd by his neglect) were coming to augment his Flames with their own. But he was either Childleſs, or if he had Children, they were Deſtined for a better place. However he was ſufficiently miſerable in his Brethren! Yet let this be a warning to all Parents, as well as other Relations; to Maſters, nay, to every Man in his particular Capacity. Let each ſtrive to weaken the Kingdom of Satan, diminiſh the Powers of Darkneſs, leſſen the number of the Damned, and keep Hell as empty as poſſible, if it be but out of pity to thoſe Unfortunates that are deſign'd for that place. And with this Memorial I end this Digreſſion and Chapter.

CHAP.

CHAP. IX.

The Diviſion of the reſt of this Treatiſe.

I. HItherto I have ſtaid without the Church, Exhorting Men to enter into it. I have, I hope, in ſome meaſure, Convicted our ſecure and idle Abſenters of Sin, and of a Sin of mighty Aggravations. I have reaſoned the Caſe with them, laid the Evil of their Way plain before them, and anſwered all their moſt frivolous Pretences. And I have ſome humble Confidence, that if they will give themſelves the trouble to Read, Conſider, and Reflect upon what has been ſaid upon this Subject, it will, in ſome meaſure, affect them. Give me leave now, to enter with the Multitude of better-minded Chriſtians into the Houſe of God *with the Voice of Joy and Praiſe, amongſt them that keep Holiday.* To conſider their Demeanour, Words, and Actions, what it is, or what it ſhou'd be there, to the end that we may know how *to keep our Foot when we enter into the Houſe of God, and offer him up a rational and becoming Sacrifice.* This is the thing I chiefly intend to purſue, *viz.* The Duty of every Frequenter of the Church, and the manner how the Aſſemblies there ought to be Religiouſly obſerved.

The

The Work which is to be performed in the Houſe of God, is either to ſpeak to him in Prayer and Praiſes, or to hearken to him ſpeaking to us in his Word, Read or Expounded by the Mouth of the Miniſtry, or the Performance of the Holy Duties by which we are initiated into the Church, and confirm'd in our Religion, I mean the receiving of the Signs and Seals of our Duty, and our Reward, the Two Sacraments. So that the Work is threefold.

1. Interceſſions and Thankſgivings, which we uſually term Prayer.

2. Inſtructions, by hearing the Word of God Read or Preached, which we call Preaching.

3. Obſignations of our ſelves to God by the uſe of either Sacrament. Of all which, and our Duty in either of them, as far as it concerns the Publick Worſhip of God in Order. And firſt of Prayer and Praiſes.

II. Prayer is the Application of our ſelves to God for thoſe things that we want, and Praiſes for thoſe things that we have already received. And in either, and both of theſe there be two things to be obſerv'd.

1. Fit Words and Expreſſions.

2. Fit Poſture of Body and Mind, during the time they are offer'd up to God.

III. There

III. There are fit Words and Expreſſions requir'd In Prayer; Words ſutable to the Greatneſs of that God we come before, and the utter unworthineſs of the Supplicants; Words few and yet comprehenſive, without Tautologies and vain Repetitions, neither too Bold and Saucy, nor yet too Faint and Faithleſs; fit for God to hear, and Man to utter. And ſeeing the Gifts of extraordinary Inſpiration (as well as other miraculous Endowments) laſted but two or three Centuries, and are now long ago ceaſed, as being neither deſign'd or neceſſary for a continuance, but only a Plantation of Chriſt's Church, (the Church being left to the ordinary Means in this Matter) as alſo that there might be a Harmony of Prayers, it pleaſed God that the extraordinary Inſpirations ſhould reſolve themſelves into certain Form of Prayers, Supplications, and Thankſgivings, which were the *ancient Liturgies* we read of old, and thoſe were nothing elſe but a Collection of thoſe Forms of Speech made and uſed by the Inſpired Apoſtles, and their immediate Succeſſors, the remains of the Spirit of Prayer which reſted upon the Church in the firſt Ages. And from theſe (with the neceſſary alterations of Times and other Circumſtances) is drawn that which Men call (ſome with the greateſt Contempt, and others with the greateſt Honour and Thankfulneſs) *the Liturgy*,

That this Form of Prayer is treated with ſuch Scorn and Contempt by ſo many, ariſes from ſeveral Cauſes which I ſhall only name.

1. From

1. From their preſent Ignorance of the ancient *Liturgies* and Forms of Prayers, and the Ways they uſed in their Addreſſes to Heaven. Which if they knew, they wou'd eaſily perceive the Conformity of the *Church of England*, to the ancient way of ſerving of God. But indeed, they enquire not about this Matter, but take it for granted, that Devout and Holy Men uſed always Prayers by the Spirit; by which Name they mean *Extemporary Prayer*; which is utterly falſe and groundleſs.

2. From their Ignorance of the preſent State of the Reformed Churches beyond the Seas, who uſe *Liturgies* or ſet Forms of Prayer as we do, even at *Geneva*, and the Reformations adjoyning. And I know none that pretend to any kind of extemporary Prayer, and extraordinary Inſpirations, but our *Engliſh Presbyterians*, and from them the other Diſſenters of ſeveral ſorts.

3. From their Ignorance of our preſent *Common-Prayer*, and the not conſidering of the ſutableneſs and reaſon of the Frame, Compoſition, Phraſes, and Forms of Words therein uſed. Many rail at it, that never will read it, or know what it is. I remember well (when I was a Child) a *Zealot* vilifying of the Common Prayer, was ask'd, whether he ever had read it, or underſtood what it was, his Anſwer was, that he never had ſeen it, nor never intended ſo to do. Men are bred up under fatal Prejudices againſt it, and therefore will hardly be brought to conſider things cooly; nor vouchſafe to read and underſtand what it is. And others run it over by Rote,

Rote, and never look into its Sence and Frame, and ſo ſlight it: Otherwiſe I dare ſay it wou'd be as much reverenced as it is deſpiſed. For never any one ſpoke evil of it yet, that throughly underſtood it.

4. The laſt reaſon is the great pretence a Crafty and Ambitious ſort of Men have to a preſent Divine Influx of the Holy Spirit, and an Infuſion of Matter and Words into their Minds, after the manner of the Holy Apoſtles, who were excus'd premeditation in their Defences before the Heathen Magiſtrates (tho' I do not find they were forbidden Premeditation in Prayer) I ſay to ſome ſuch thing theſe Men pretend in their Extemporary Prayer (brought in at firſt by Emiſſaries of the Church of *Rome*, to divide us, and diſparage the Common-Prayer of our Church *) And tho' they have no Promiſe of ſuch a Gift continuing in Church; and the Text, *Rom.* 8. 26. will bear no ſuch meaning, yet they ſeem to intimate ſome ſuch thing. And the common People neglect their ordinary Prayers to run after theſe, as Men extraordinary Gifted, and *the great Power of God.* And the *Politick Teachers* have a conſiderable number of Words and Phraſes, that they ſhuffle, alter, and change; ſo that it ſeems to be a new Prayer, every time ſet off with mighty Zeal, Loudneſs, Noiſe, Tones, and Geſtures. The Auditory are taught to dote on theſe ſorts of Prayers at that rate, that every Pulpit-Prayer made by a Man's private Spirit, is valued much above the *Common Prayer*, tho' made by the Publick Spirit of the Church. This

* *Vide* Fox's *and* Firebrand's, *&c.*

This is certainly a great Deluſion, and will at laſt prove the ruine of the true ancient Chriſtianity.

But as many ſlight the Publick Prayers, becauſe common, ſo others priſe and honour them next to the Holy Scriptures, and the rather becauſe they are ſo. They know that the firſt Compilers were Men that ſeal'd the truth of their Religion with their Blood. That the Matter and Form is agreeable to the Supplications of the Ancient Church, ſutable to every Man's Wants, and expreſs'd in proper Terms, becoming Orthodox Chriſtians; and that the moſt are taken out, and all agreeable to the Holy Scriptures. Each Prayer hath its proper Argument to ſupport it, and each Petition is grounded on Promiſes and Examples to encourage us. The Form brings in the People to bear ſome part in *Reſponſes*, and the *Amen*; and thereby awakes them into a Compartnerſhip, and ſo anſwers to the name *Common-Prayer*, becauſe common to them both. And the whole compil'd into a Service Grave, Decent, and Symetrical; worthy of good and wiſe Men, [redacted] to offer to a merciful God. And thus much I thought fit to ſay in defence of the rational Service of our Church, daily Crucifi'd betwixt the Prophane and the Schiſmatical.

2. There is alſo a fit Poſture of Body and Mind requir'd in Publick Prayer, ſutable to the Greatneſs of the Deity that we are to appear before, and the Work that we are to do in his Houſe.

IV. For

IV. For the Posture of the Body, tho' 'tis less Principal, yet 'tis necessary to make our Worship compleat, and must not (unless upon great cause) be omitted. The Body has offended as well as the Soul, and is a Partner in the Sin, and therefore must be in the Prayer for Forgiveness. Besides, the Example to others is one end of Publick Worship, and without an humble Posture we are not Exemplary. They can only see our outward Demeanour, and hear our Words, but can take no cognizance of the Mind, but only by the outward Signs. And this outward Worship of the Body is the only Light in this particular that can shine before Men, to induce them to do the like, and so *glorifie our Father which is in Heaven.* The bodily Worship of the Devout Penitent, is Kneeling, Prostration, or bowing down of the Body. Of this I shall give this short but full Account.

All Nations in their Worship express'd some outward Posture of Humiliation as a visible sign of the Worshipper's, humbling or lessening of himself. That which obtain'd the most general Practice amongst the *Jews* and *Christians*, was bowing of the Knee. *Solomon* is said to stand before the Altar, which signifies the place of his Body, but that is Explain'd in the Verse following, by kneeling down on his Knees, 1 *Chron.* 12. 13. which denoted the Posture of his Body at the solemn Prayer he made at the great Dedication of the Temple. And (to omit many other in the Old Testament) so did *Daniel* even at his private Worship, *Dan.* 6. 10. This was the common posture of Application to

our

our Saviour. They made their Addreſſes to him by *kneeling down and worſhipping him*; ſo did the Father of the *Lunatick*; ſo did St. *Peter*; ſo did the Young Ruler that came to ask him, *What he ſhou'd do to be ſaved*, *Mar.* 10. 17. So did our Lord himſelf in his Agony, *Luke* 22. 41. And ſo did his firſt Martyr St. *Stephen* in his Paſſion. And finally, it was the uſual way of outward Worſhip, as appears by the Practice of St. *Paul*, and the Church of *Epheſus*, *Acts* 20. 36. and 21. 5. And by the bowing of the Knee is expreſſed Divine Worſhip to Jeſus. *At the Name of Jeſus every Knee ſhall bow*, &c. *Phil.* 2. 20. The Primitive Chriſtians commonly uſed this Poſture at their Prayers (excepting only that at ſome certain times for a particular and ſignificant Reaſon they prayed ſtanding) and ſo has the Church of God ever ſince, and ſo doth our Church command us in her *Rubrick*. And certainly, if the practice of God's Servants, either in the Old Teſtament or in the New, the Example of the Church of Chriſt in all Ages, or the Commands of our own Church in particular, hath any Influence upon thoſe that call themſelves Chriſtians, Kneeling muſt be the only proper outward Poſture of Devotion. However, ſitting was always condemn'd, and look'd upon as great Rudeneſs at Prayers. And to this I ſhall add, that I never yet ſaw any Devout Perſon, but he Kneeled at his Prayers; or any that us'd to ſit at them, that ever was ſo. And ſo I diſmiſs this point.

V. For

V. For the poſture of the Mind (which is more conſiderable, as the Soul is more excellent than the Body, or the Spiritual Worſhip than Carnal) it muſt be a mixture of Faith, and yet Humility. Faith to bring him into the preſence of God, becauſe he has an Advocate there, and yet Humility to teach him his diſtance. Faith uſhers him into the Divine Preſence; but Humility keeps him in the outward Court with the *Publican*, and teaches him this ſelf-condemning Addreſs, *God be Merciful to me a Sinner*; or, with the returning Penitent, *Father I have Sinned againſt Heaven, and againſt Thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy Son:* And if either of theſe muſt be predominant in our Religious Addreſs, it muſt be the latter; inaſmuch as moſt Men are apt to flatter themſelves, and have more need of Humility than Confidence. Humility will keep a Man from a too forward Boldneſs, an audacious Familiarity with his Judge (as the Cuſtom of ſome is ſaid to be that talk to God, as tho' he is their Equal, and uſe him to *Queſtions* and *Commands*) it will repreſent to him his Sins and his Deſervings. God and Man both love a modeſt Petitioner. Let then thy Confidence ſerve no more than to conduct thee in, and help thee to deliver thy Meſſage, and then let it give place to the greater Grace of Humility to do the reſt, that thy Prayers may be heard, and thou return Juſtified. Thus much in General, and for Particulars I referr it to the following Chapter.

CHAP.

CHAP. X.

Of the Neceſſary Preparations to Publick Prayers.

I. IN Order to the due acquitting of our ſelves in the Duty of Publick Prayer, ſome things are to be done by way of Preparation, and others in that Divine Action. Some ſhort Preparation is convenient at all times, eſpecially at times of ſolemn Application to God, and that conſiſts in ſetting of the Mind into a right Temper. And this is done by conſidering,

1. What we are, whither going, and what to do? That we want Pardon of many Sins, and the Aſſiſtance of many Graces, as well as bodily Neceſſaries. And here it wou'd be convenient certainly to conſider, what are thoſe Sins in particular, that we forget not to reflect upon them in our Confeſſions, and what are thoſe Graces (as well as other Neceſſaries) we want, that we forget not them in our Supplications.

2. The Majeſty of that Perſon we go to meet, the Great and Glorious God, Pure and Holy, Infinite in Power, the Great Creator of Heaven and Earth, Juſt as well as Merciful, One who invites Sinners, and is abundant in forgiving the Penitent; and yet One who will by

no means clear the Guilty, and such is every irrepenting Sinner. And this will fill our Minds with Notions agreeable to the Object we are to appear before.

3. The business we are to do there, which is the greatest Concern in the World, the Pardon of our Sins, upon which depends our present and future Happiness or Misery. A thing of infinite Importance, beyond Friends, Estates, Health, yea, and Life it self, which is lent us only to this purpose. And this will teach us frequency and seriousness in the Divine Service.

4. That in order to this, we ought to part with those things (for the present at least) that are likely to hinder the due performance of this Work. Such are (*first*) all the Thoughts of Mirth, Jollity, and Pleasure. *Secondly*, All Worldly Cares and Domestick Concerns. *Thirdly*, Those Thoughts that are improper at that time, tho' otherwise lawful and laudable. Such are Disputes, Controversies, and indeed every thing alienated from the Work we are to do. This will render the Mind empty, and fit to receive Divine Impressions.

5. And Lastly, The lifting up of the Mind to God, and the placing of our selves before him, and in his Presence, together with all the Heavenly Host and fixing of our Souls there, and this is call'd *Devotion*. Men are capable of higher or lower Flights in this, according to the different Powers of the Mind, and the efforts of Fancy. Nor must we be discouraged,

if

if we cannot reach the heights of ſome, becauſe this is not always the effect of Grace, but ſometimes of Nature. He that means beſt is the beſt Gueſt in God's Houſe.

But here it may be obſerv'd to me, that ſome Men who have an habitual Impreſſion of the Love and Fear of God upon their Minds, need not ſuch ſolemn Thoughts, in order to Publick Prayer; and others cannot a while to do it. Their Buſineſs and Imployment in the World will not admit of the formality of ſuch a Preparation. 'Tis true, and I confeſs both. There are ſome that need it not, and others that cannot have time to do it, unleſs it be on ſolemn Times, and Days of Publick Humiliations. And yet let it be likewiſe remembred, that I write not for the uſe of the perfect, but imperfect Chriſtian. That every Man at one time or other, needs a Remembrancer. That the moſt buſie in the World hath yet ſome few Minutes to ſpare (if it be but when he actually enters into the Houſe of God) and ſuch Reflections will take up but a ſmall time. At leaſt, that it is neceſſary till we have got ſome conſiderable habit of Piety. And finally, that every Man ought, in order to this Duty, as to others, put his Mind into the beſt poſture of Seriouſneſs and Devotion his Time and Circumſtances will permit; leſt he rudely thruſts himſelf into the Marriage Feaſt without a Wedding-Garment, and be juſtly queſtion'd as the unprepared Gueſt. *Friend, how cam'ſt thou hither?*

II. Having thus in ſome meaſure prepar'd our Minds to entertain the Thoughts that muſt accompany the Divine Worſhip, let us enter

into the Houſe of God, and there confirm and Seal thoſe Notions on our Souls by ſome ſhort Prayer or Ejaculation. And having plac'd our ſelves, let us endeavour to ſhut the Door faſt againſt all impertinent and improper (as well as ſinful) Thoughts; and employ our Minds with Repetitions and Improvements of our Preparations. And when the Divine Service begins, our only care is to keep our Thoughts up to the words of *God's Prieſts*, and let our Mind neither go before, nor ſtay long behind; but if poſſibly accompany him who is the Mouth of the Congregation. To hearken and attend to what is read in our Ears, and make every Petition our own, by giving our aſſent to it; and the whole Prayer ours, by ſealing it with our *Amen*. And thus to continue till all is done, and then we have liberty to retire, return to our Habitations, and reſume our other lawful Thoughts and worldly buſineſs.

This I take to be a rational and eaſie account of our publick Devotions, and all that is neceſſary to a good Chriſtian, without either Extaſie or Enthuſiaſm, which the myſtical Divines of the Church of *Rome* wou'd teach you, or ſome of the Rapturous Diſſenters ſeem to aim at. It is both eaſie to apprehend, and natural to perform. 'Tis but to hearken to that which is read to you, attend what you are about, make it your own by your Conſent, and the Work is well done. To liſten as we do to any new thing, and deſire heartily what we hear another endeavours for us, and what will do us good, and join in the Applications that are made for our greateſt Intereſt, and one wou'd think we cou'd not poſſibly do otherwiſe.

III. And

III. And yet after all (ſo frail and fluctuating is our condition here) this ſeemingly eaſie and reaſonable thing is ſeldom or never exactly performed. And I note it here, to prevent any ſcruple that may ariſe in the Mind of the Conſcientious Reader, that it is extream hard, if not impoſſible, to keep our Thoughts exactly fix'd upon the Divine Object, without any Variation. For tho' our Words are in our own Power, yet our Thoughts are not always ſo; nor have we always an abſolute Dominion over them. Every little Object is apt to divert them, and any accidental Emergency to call them aſide. Beſides, the Devil is then moſt buſie in repreſenting ſomething elſe to our Fancy, than that we are about, and make us ſtay behind, or run before the *Miniſter*, and ſo not attend his Words with our Deſires; and all to try to cheat us of our Prayers. For he well knows, that we can benefit our ſelves chiefly with our own Prayers; and none are our own, but thoſe we actually conſent to. Nay, ſometimes the very commonneſs of our Prayers, that ſhou'd make us uſe them better, makes us to uſe them worſe; and our fore-knowledge of the form of the Words, renders them unregarded. This *Vacillation* of Thoughts is in ſome the Conſequent of their very Conſtitution, (which cannot long dwell upon any one Object) and the plenty of Images in the Brain that ſtrive to repreſent themſelves unto us. And in others, an evil Habit acquir'd by the want of Recollection. But in none it is a Sin, unleſs indulg'd and conſented to. Let us look upon it as an Imperfection of our Nature, which we cannot remove on a ſuddain,

nor wholly during our Lives. However, it is our Duty to ſtrive and pray againſt it. And tho' we cannot keep ſuch a conſtant Guard over our wandring and erratick Thoughts, as to fix them even during that Sacred Time; yet let us watch over them as well as we can. And when we find them (like Gameſome Spaniels) roving after falſe Queſts; let us call them in and chaſtiſe them. And in the mean-time not afflict our ſelves, if (notwithſtanding our utmoſt watchfulneſs) they now and then ſteal away from us. For 'tis a certain Rule (which a *Great Man at this time in the Church* hath obſerv'd in his *Sermon againſt wandring of the Mind in God's Service*) *that God will upon our Requeſt, give us a Power over this Infirmity, or elſe not impute it as a Crime unto us.*

IV. And yet after all, tho' they are not always Sins, yet they are always great Infirmities; the occaſion of Sins, and the cauſe of the inefficiency of our Prayers, and therefore to be oppos'd, and if poſſible avoided. And to effect this, we are to endeavour to fetter up the Imagination, and let Recollection and Remembrance lie ſtill, and not to diſturb the Objects treaſur'd up there, but employ the Intellect or Underſtanding upon our Prayers only. And to this purpoſe, let the Eyes aſſiſt the Ears, and Reading, Hearing. I mean, that every one ſhou'd uſe the Book of Prayers, and have the Eyes of his Body, as well as Mind, fixt upon that which is read, and ſo accompany the *Miniſter*. This will be a means to bind up the Thoughts of the *Orator* to the Work he is about, and in ſome meaſure prevent Wandrings. And here let none wonder if I commend reading of Prayers

ers out of a Book, before that which we call Extemporary; and of all Books, I prefert that of our *Publick Prayers*. For I think that no Man (at this time of the Day) doth or can in reaſon expect Infuſions of Words and Matter, without thinking or premeditation; and therefore in Extemporary Prayer the Mind muſt be employ'd to ſearch out firſt fit Sence, and then Words to expreſs it, and conſequently the Devotion muſt be allay'd and cool'd by the diverſion of the Invention, for we cannot attend two things at the ſame time. And then for our *Liturgy*, it is compos'd with thoſe ſingular advantages of ſhort Prayers, *Verſicles* and *Reſponſes*, that it ſerves to keep the Devotion awake and flaming; and 'tis truly a *Common-Prayer* both to the Prieſt and People. And all that I ſhall add on this point is theſe two things: *Firſt* that we ſhou'd make it our own, pray over the Prayers, Pſalms, *&c.* adapt them to our ſelves, and our own Neceſſities, and having received the ſence into our Hearts, let it there take new Spirit, and thence be offer'd up in Holy Flames on God's Altar. This (for ought I can ſee) is the only praying by the Spirit, and all other pretences (ſince the ceaſing of ſupernatural Gifts of Tongues and Elocution in the Primitive Church) are either Cheats or Deluſions. *Secondly*, That we ſhou'd endeavour to corroborate our Prayers on both ſides, begin and end them with ſome ſhort Petition for Acceptance. In the beginning beg God's aſſiſtance to prevent our uſual Wandrings, and in the end, that he wou'd Pardon them. That ſo thoſe Petitions that we have paſſed over too unadviſedly and haſtily, may yet become beneficial to us, and made our

own by our after Act. And I cannot but commend those that pray some short time on their Knees, at the end of Prayers for this purpose.

V. I have said this much to satisfie and direct the tender and conscientious Worshipper of God, that is conscious to himself of his Mental Aberrations in the time when his Thoughts shou'd all wait upon his God, and who knows this Infirmity, and bewails what he cannot wholly prevent. But what shall I say unto the bold and presumptuous Sinner, that rushes into the Divine Presence rudely and impudently, and brings a multitude of sensual Thoughts and sinful Intentions and Resolutions with him? Of him that neither Reverenceth God or his Sanctuary. That comes to Church, and yet will allow God neither inward nor outward Worship there; that comes for Diversion only, and sits down and entertains himself with any Object he meets with, but that of Devotion. Some there be I fear (and yet but few I hope) that come and sit down there in the Seat of the Scornful, and make it their business to ridicule either the Service or the *Administrator* of it. And others (but I hope not many neither) that come to behold Vanity, and feed their Eyes with Beauties, if not upon design'd Assignations. When I think of either of these, I cannot but remember the Meetings of the *Sons of God* in *Job*, and at every one of them that Satan made one of the Company. For he that comes to scoff at Religion, is a Devil Incarnate; and so is he that makes the House of God the Scene of his Voluptuousness. And even the most modest Sinner that comes to Church with wrong In-

Intentions, designs an Affront to his God in his own House, and abuses him to his Face. It wou'd surely be infinitely better for such a Person to stay away and not offend the Divine Presence with his Company. Of the two, 'tis better be a private than a publick Atheist, and to deny God in the House of Debauchery, than in that of Religion. To Sin against him in private may be the effect of a violent Temptation, but to come into his Presence, and there to offer Sacrifice to the Devil or our own Lusts, must needs be a presumptuous Sin, a Sin with a Vengeance entail'd to it.

In the like predicament, but in a lower degree, we must place all Hypocrites that serve God in his House with the lifting up of the Hands or Eyes, but not with their Heart. That have a form of the strictest Godliness, but deny the Power of it. And to this Class I reduce all *Temporizers*, *Flatterers*, *Parasites*, and whosoever comes to the House of God to obtain Favour with Men, or to be thought Holy. And generally all that come thither with wrong Intentions, or being there, willingly depart from their Intention, of doing nothing less there than Worshipping God, that gaze and look about upon any new Object, that Discourse and Talk one to another, or Sleep, or that do not attend the thing they are about, *That draw nigh unto God with their Mouths, and honour him with their Lips, and yet place their Hearts* (their Understandings, Wills, and Affections) *far from him.* These are absent, while they are present, and offer God their Halt, their Blind and Lame. They bring a Body without a Soul, and a dead

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inſtead of a living Sacrifice. And in theſe caſes (as well as the firſt) 'tis far better to ſtay at home about our Worldly Concerns, than to affront him with our Preſence. For while we are there, the Seats and the Pillars are as much preſent, and more obſequious Partakers in his Service than we. And we might expect that the Deity wou'd immediately puniſh the wrong done him, and vindicate his Honour, did not Mercy plead for the Sinner, Patience hold his Hands, and Juſtice willingly conſent to defer Vengeance to the other World, where the bold Offender (if he doth not repent in this World) will be ſure to find it.

VII. *Laſtly*, Let me not be thought ſevere, if I here cenſure another ſort of Church-Men; thoſe I mean that do not make it their buſineſs to come at the beginning of Divine Service. That think it too much time to wait upon God throughout all the parts of his Worſhip, and enough to meet him in the middle or latter end of Prayers, or at the beginning of the Pſalm or Sermon. Indeed there lurks a great many Symptoms of very bad Men and bad Chriſtians in this practice, and is a very great preſumption of Atheiſm or Hypocriſie. This Abſenter ſerves God by halves, and conſequently muſt think that God heeds not what he doth, neither his Neglects nor Prayers. He may frequent the Church out of Formality and Cuſtom, but cannot out of Conſcience and Duty; for then he wou'd fear with *Ananias* to withhold the leaſt part of his Time. He cannot be a Penitent that will miſs the *Confeſſion*, nor a Fearer of God that values not the *Abſolution*. He cannot be Devout that

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can diſpenſe with the Invitation to Worſhip God, which is *Pſal.* 95. or the other Pſalms; nor Attentive that cares not for the *Leſſons*, nor a Chriſtian Believer that will not confeſs his Faith. He muſt needs be preſum'd to be careleſs of God's help, that neglects the *Collects* for Peace and Grace, and diſloyal to God and Man, that will not pray for all that are in Authority in Church or State, and very wicked and uncharitable, that thinks the *Litany* uſeleſs. And if ſuch a pretended Chriſtian be neither Penitent, a fearer of God, Devout, Attentive, nor a Chriſtian Believer; if he be careleſs of God's help, diſloyal to God as well as Man, and very wicked and very uncharitable, I leave all Men to ſay what he is beſides.

'Tis true, I have heard of ſome that ſtay away, out of diſreſpect to our *Liturgy*, till moſt part of it be over, but I look upon this pretence to be alſo no better than Hypocriſie; for it is but a mocking of God to come even to part of a Worſhip we cannot join in; if we can be preſent at a part, we may be as well at all. But this pretence is ſeldom us'd. This irreligious Cuſtom is the effect uſually of Idleneſs and Coldneſs in Religion, and has a Tincture of Atheiſm in it, and tends to it. 'Tis true alſo, our Time is not always in our Hand, and we may be ſometimes by miſtake thrown out, and ſo be behind our Brethren; but this is to be born with, if it be not affected or indulg'd, but mended the next time. 'Tis certainly a ſhame to be behind with God in our Duty. An indecency always, if not a Sin; and he never Worſhips God as he ought to do, that doth not begin with him.

I have now done with what I had to ſay about, our ſpeaking to God, our Interceſſions and Praiſes, which are the proper Worſhip of God, and the chief buſineſs of our Chriſtian Aſſemblies, and ſhall now deſcend to that which is deſign'd for Inſtruction. The publication of the Will of God, by reading the Scriptures, or that which we call (at this day) *Preaching* of which in the two following Chapters.

CHAP.

CHAP XI.

Of Preaching, or Inſtruction.

1. THAT the Chriſtian might know what he ought to Believe and Practice; when and how to Repent, and how to make his Applications to God in Prayer and Praiſes, we uſe another Office in the Publick Aſſemblies, and that is the Promulgation of the Law of God, and the Declaration of his Will to the People in all theſe particulars. And this is done in reading the *Leſſons*, the *Epiſtle*, *Goſpel*, *Creed*, and the *Commandments*, or any other part of the *Holy Scriptures*. Or by Expounding and applying any of theſe in a form of ſound Words made by the *Preacher* himſelf, or ſet forth by the Authority of the Church. And all this is what I call *Preaching*. By which I mean the Declaring of the Will of God to the People out of God's Word, whether it be in the very form of Words we find in the *Holy Scriptures*, or in that of the Churches, or our own. The firſt is the reading of the *Holy Scriptures*, the ſecond is that of the *Homilies*, and the third is that of our ordinary and weekly *Sermons*. Indeed the latter has ſwallowed up the two former; and Man being proud of himſelf aud his own Thoughts, has adapted the Name of Preaching only to his own Compoſitions, and got the Credit of Sanctity and Neceſſity from the other two, as that which ſeems to be the more Powerful and Gifted Work, and moſt effectual to beat down the

the Walls of Sin. And from hence it is, that the former are thought hardly worth the frequenting. And common use and popular prejudice has confirm'd the Name to this latter. So that Preaching now in this restrain'd Sense, is a Discourse made upon a Text of Scripture, uttered by the Author from the *Pulpit*, tending to the Instruction and the Edification of the Auditory. *But from the beginning it was not so*, and in better times it was quite otherwise. The declaring of the Will of God however done, was call'd Preaching of the Gospel, and the reading of the Law of *Moses* was said to be the Preaching of him in the Synagogues every *Sabbath-day*, *Acts* 15. 21. There is a considerable difference betwixt the Apostolick Discourses, and those of after-times, when the extraordinary effusions of the Spirit ceased. Theirs were the Dictates of the Infallible Director within them; ours that of much Study, Reading and Thinking. Theirs the Product of an unerring Spirit; Ours no further the Word of God, than they are agreeable to the *Analogy* of Faith, and the Doctrines of Christian Religion. Our present Compositions are sometimes Artificial and Pertinent, and sometimes full of hot Zeal and cold Arguments, loose and incoherent. This I note, not to reflect upon Sermons in general, nor upon any Person in particular; but to rectifie the unreasonable prejudice of those that think their time mispent at Church, if there be never a Sermon, and in comparison of this, they slight *Prayers* and *Reading*. A great folly this; dangerous to true Religion, and begot betwixt Pride and Curiosity. And I think it all the reason in the World to put hearing of the *Holy Scriptures* read, upon equal ground at least

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(if not, as it deſerves, upon higher) than hearing of Sermons. If it be but that the *Auditor* of both may underſtand his Duties during this Miniſtration, which is the chief end of this Diſcourſe, and they are theſe that follow.

1. A prepared Mind to receive the Word of God: But ſeeing the whole Duty in the Ancient Church begun and ended with Prayer (as it doth ſtill, if the Order eſtabliſhed be obſerved) the Preparation to Prayer is enough, and of that I have ſpoke already.

2. Reverence and Attention. A deference to what we hear, as to the Law of our Great King and Judge, who according to that, will give Sentence at the laſt day. To attend it as a thing of infinite concern. Such is the Knowledge of Eternal Life, of obtaining of Heaven, and eſcaping of Hell. It is the Rule of our Lives, and the Director of our ways to Happineſs, and is therefore to be hearkened unto with the greateſt ſeriouſneſs. The Word of God requires our Reverence and Attention; but then eſpecially, when it declares to us the glad tidings of Salvation. And therefore it is obſervable in the Ancient Church: The reading of the Goſpel had always a peculiar ſort of Reverence attending it. They did then (as we are commanded now) riſe off their Seats and ſtandup during that time. Nor did the greateſt Perſons refuſe to ſhew this reſpect to the Law of the *King of kings*. And this was not only conſtantly obſerv'd at the Goſpel, but uſually at the Sermon alſo, to keep their Attentions alive and wakeful. And the Great and Pious Emperor *Conſtantine* wou'd not be perſuaded to ſit down at

a long Sermon of *Euſebius*'s. And he gave this Reaſon for it; *That it was unfit to attend upon any Diſcourſe concerning God, with eaſe and ſoftneſs. And that it was conſonant to Piety and Religion, that Diſcourſes about Divine things ſhould be heard ſtanding.* But this the Church enjoined not as it did the former; and ours doth at this time the former, but not the latter. She only commands Reverence and Attention. And what ſhe comprizeth under theſe two words, you may read with much ſatisfaction in the 18th *Canon Anno* 1603. To which I refer all her Religious Sons.

In a word, the cauſe of Reverence is uſually the Greatneſs, Goodneſs, or Juſtice of the Perſon that ſpeaks to us, and we riſe up and hear with the higheſt reſpect the words of a *King*. But ſuch are the *Leſſions* and other *Portions* of the *Holy Scripture* which are read, and ſuch are the *Homilies* and *Sermons* that are Preached in our Ears. They are the words of the Great, the Good and the Juſt God, and are uttered by his *Miniſters* who are *appointed to ſhew unto Men the way to Salvation.* And here I cannot but reflect upon the Rudeneſs of theſe times and places, where Men were accuſtomed to ſit and hear God ſpeaking unto them with their Heads covered. A Cuſtom taken up in the Barbarous Wars in *England*, and in that falſly pretended Reformation, agreeable to the Impudence of the Armed Saints of thoſe times, who took the boldneſs to be familiar with their Maker: But God be thanked it is now laid aſide as an unſeemly thing in all Civiliz'd and Religious places. A Cuſtom quite contrary to the Equity at leaſt (if not to the plain words of St. *Paul*'s Doctrine, 1 *Cor.* 11. 4.) of doing any Divine Offices in the Church of

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God *with our Heads covered.* And laſtly, a Cuſtom whereby we uſe God worſe than we durſt do our Earthly Superiours, before whom we dare neither ſit, nor cover our Heads. And tho' I do not place any thing of the eſſence of Religion in this Civil Ceremony; yet ſeeing it is with us a ſign of Reverence, I know not why it ſhou'd not be then us'd when we ought to ſhew the higheſt.

The Cauſe of Attention is not only the Greatneſs of the Perſon ſpeaking to us, but likewiſe the Matter and Subject of his Speech. And the more we are concern'd in it, the greater our Silence and Attention ought to be. If it be a concern of our Health, Life, Liberty, or even of any Secular Advantage, Profit or Diſprofit; it is receiv'd uſually with Gravity, Serioufneſs, Attention, Joy or Sorrow, according to the import of the thing for our good or hurt; and accordingly it moves all the Paſſions of our Minds in its Reception. But here the Subject Matter is infinitely of more value to us than the whole World, nor will all its Glories make any retribution to us, if we miſcarry. It is no leſs than our Eternal Salvation and the ſecuring of Heaven. "This Life "is both ſhort and uncertain, and my ſtay here "may be but till the next hour, and cannot be "many years at longeſt; why ſhould I then trou-"ble my ſelf about it or its appendages? Let the "World even ſlide on, and my future Circum-"ſtances happen as they will; they cannot ren-"der me much happy or much miſerable; either "in Meaſure or Duration; when I conſider ne-"ver-ending Eternity, and the Happineſs or Mi-"ſery of that fix'd State that never can be al-"ter'd! This is *that Subject* that I'll hear of; 'tis "my Greateſt, becauſe my Everlaſting Good; and

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" therefore this only is worthy all the Powers of " my Soul, and my moſt ſerious Attention! Thus let the Chriſtian ſtir up himſelf and argue againſt all the Temptations of Sleep, Talk, Curioſity, Diverſion, and all other the wanderings of his Mind in the time of hearing the Word of God. While I deſcend to the next Qualification of a Worthy Auditor in the Houſe of God, which is,

3. Remembrance and Recollection of that which he hears. By which I mean a careful treaſuring up of that which we hear, and a careful review of theſe Leſſons whenſoever we have occaſion for them. Recollection is the Daughter of Attention. For he that hears reverently and attentively, lays up what he hears in the Treaſury of his Memory; often viſits and reviews his Store; and has every thing ready to produce when he has occaſion for it. And that which is thus laid up, ſticks long, and is not eaſily obliterated. Men have uſually living and laſting repreſentations of that which neerly concerns their Lives, and theſe impreſſions ſtick long by them. But foraſmuch as neither Nature nor Art can preſerve the Images of things always, but they muſt decay; and the remembrance of every thing is tranſitory as the things themſelves, and becauſe Recollection is not the ultimate Duty of hearing, but only in order to the laſt, which is Reformation of our Lives; let us proceed towards it, by adding,

4. Reflection and Self-application. For by Reflection I do not mean, the making Obſervations upon the other Auditors, as is too common among Men; or to obſerve when our Neighbour is perſtring'd by ſuch a Doctrine, or Reproof. We

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are too apt to point out to others, when we ought to look inwards on our ſelves. Nor do I mean by Reflections, to Judge the *Miniſter*, or Cenſure his *Meen*, *Carriage*, or *Deportment* in reading or ſpeaking. Thou haſt no ſuch Authority, nor was it the end of thy coming to the Houſe of God. This is the ſign of a wicked and deluſory Heart, which has the impudence to invade the Bench, when he ſtands himſelf Indited at the Bar. No! Thy Reflections muſt be on thy ſelf, and thou muſt apply every thing to thine own Soul. Thou only knoweſt thine own Wound, and canſt feel when thou art touch'd to the Quick, and ſo apply the Plaſter. Conſider therefore, to what place the Voice of God is directed, and examine whether or no thou art the Man. The Preacher can only declare the Will of God, his Promiſes and his Judgments: 'Tis the Hearer that muſt apply all to himſelf, and make uſe of the one or the other, as he finds his Condition. And therefore,

5. The end of all is Repentance and Reformation of Life. We go to Church to pray to God and to hear his Word Read and Expounded. We hear with great concern, becauſe we wou'd remember. We remember, becauſe we wou'd apply it to our ſelves, and examine our own Souls by its light; and we apply it, to make our ſelves better to repent of thoſe ſins that we have diſcover'd, ſtrengthen thoſe Graces we find weak, and Conform our Lives to thoſe Laws we have heard read unto us. Without this laſt, our hearing is nothing but a dangerous Curioſity; and our Knowledge is far worſe than Ignorance. The Sermons and other Diſcourſes we have heard,

will riſe up in Judgment againſt us and Condemn us, becauſe we have not profited by them. But when all theſe are united into the ſame Chain, like the ſeveral links they follow one another. Our preſence in the Houſe of God produces our hearing of his Will, and that receiv'd with due Reverence and Attention, is laid up in our Hearts with care, amongſt our greateſt Concerns, where by application, it works the good Work of amendment and newneſs of Life. Thus our daily Food is received into our Mouths, deſcends thence into the Stomach, is ſeparated there into Chyle, and thence by another Digeſtion into Blood, and ſo augments the daily decays of Nature, and ſupports Life and Strength. And thus the good Seed ſown in good Ground dies to live, ſprings up in the Blade, and lifts up it ſelf into the Ear, where againſt the Harveſt, it is increaſed thirty, ſixty, or a hundred Fold. And this puts me in mind of our Saviour's Parable of the Sower, where we ſhall ſee the effects of bad and good Ground, and the difference of Hearers which ſhall ſerve for the application of this Part in the Chapter following.

CHAP.

CHAP. XII.

Applications of the Diſcourſe aforegoing, and Reflections on the ſeveral ſorts of Hearers.

OUR Lord's Parable of the Sower, *Matth.* 13. and *Luke* 8. 5. And his Caution thereupon in the 18th verſe following, will afford me fit Reflections, and the Application of this Subject.

1. He obſerves three ſorts of unprofitable Hearers to one that was Fruitful; and I cou'd wiſh the diſproportion were no greater in this our Age. But that every Man wou'd come with a ſerious deſign to Church, and when there, wou'd ſeriouſly endeavour to be inſtructed.

The firſt is the Careleſs Hearer that comes with ſome good intent (perhaps) but his Heart deceives him. It is hard like the high-way, trodden down with the continual tramplings of Beaſts of burden, of buſineſs and the like. Or 'tis like the Paths left between the Lands for Men to paſs to and fro. It is uncultivated and unprepar'd by Meditation, Contrition, and Reſolution. He is not concern'd at what he hears, and the good Seed of the Word makes no impreſſion upon him, and falls no deeper than the Seed doth upon high-ways or beaten Paths. The Word enters no farther than his Ears; is heard as com-

mon Diſcourſes, and a thing of Formality and Decency. This the Enemy of Mankind ſoon eſpies, and by intruding other thoughts into the Mind, doth in effect like the Fowls of the Air with Seed that lies on the bare Ground, catches away theſe Images of Divine things, and ſo the Heavenly Notion like *Nebuchadnezzar*'s *Dream*, ſlides away into the Abyſs of Forgetfulneſs, and become Fruitleſs.

The next is the Temporary Hearer, and his coming is with greater Expectations, and Reſolutions. He both hears and hearkens, and receives the Cœleſtial Food as the parch'd Ground doth the Dew of Heaven, with ſome eagerneſs and ſatisfaction. He recollects it, and talks of it, and begins to reform his Life accordingly. He becomes Hot and Zealous, and makes ſome noiſe with it. It grows up ſuddenly and makes an early ſhew, and yet it is but like the Graſs on the Houſe tops that withereth before ripe; or as Grain upon the Stones with a little Earth, ſoon dried away. When this Hearer conſiders the trouble of the new Birth, and the uneaſineſs of breaking inveterate Habits from within, and ſome inconveniencies from without, he ſtops, and his Courage fails him. His Reſolutions are not ſet deep, but grow weaker, and at laſt quite deceive him; and thus this Hearer is likewiſe Fruitleſs.

The third is the Carnal and Covetous Hearer; and he goes beyond the laſt, and yet not far enough. His Heart is naturally good Ground, like that at the bottom of Hedges, and amongſt the Weeds. He has excellent Parts, as Underſtanding and Memory. He comes to Church with

with better Reſolutions, and hears with Judgment and Diſcretion; and he carries it home and applys it; and thus it is Planted in a good Ground and ſprings up to the hopes of a plentiful Harveſt. But alas his good Ground is too fully ſet with Briers, Thorns and Weeds (*The Cares of this Life and the deceitfulneſs of Riches*, ſhou'd have been rooted out even) the ſmalleſt Fibres, and the Ground cultivated and fitted to receive the Seed. Covetouſneſs was Lord of this Ground, and had Planted there before the love of this Life, and the Cares of Riches. Theſe were thick and deep ſet and took up all the Mans Thoughts; nor cou'd his Religious Reſolutions bear up againſt Worldly Intereſt. He durſt proceed no farther in Piety, than wou'd ſuit with his Earthly Concerns; and cou'd obey *Chriſt* no more, when his Commands contradicted thoſe of *Mammon*. And thus his Reſolutions and Beginnings of Piety were ſtifled as the Grain ſpringing up amongſt the Thorns and Weeds. The hopeful Hearer, at firſt inquiſitive after the way to Heaven, when hears *he muſt ſell all and give to the Poor*, goes away from Chriſt, heavy and diſcontented that he cou'd not pleaſe two contrary Maſters.

2. Theſe were the worſt ſort of Hearers that the Divine Wiſdom thought fit to mention in that Age, and yet the very worſt of theſe are Saints if compar'd to many of ours. Give me leave to note ſome of theſe.

1. The Hypocritical Hearer that comes to Church without any intent to be Edified, but for ſome by-deſign. To be ſeen by others, or to get the Opinion of being thought Zealous, or

get an acquaintance with ſuch. And when he is at Divine Service and Sermon, he imitates the Religious Meen all the while, performs all the Ceremonies, makes all the Reſponſes, and hearkens with ſeeming concern: But his Heart all this while is far from God, acting a Play and driving on the main deſign, which is ſome Worldly Advantage.

2. The Curious Hearer, whom Curioſity and the deſire of knowing ſome new thing, brings to Church, and then Judges whether the Preacher doth his Office well, and how he comes off. He is always to learn, and runs from one Church to another to hear Sermons from ſome Celebrated Preacher. He is taken with ſome ſingular Action, ſome ſtrain of Paſſion of the Miniſter, and any new home and penetrating Expreſſion wounds and (at the ſame time) wins his Heart. He is not for old Senſe and Reaſon, but for new-coin'd Phraſes, Tones and Geſtures; and will travel many Miles to hear this Soul-ſaving Doctrine; which he hearkens to with great Attention and carries home and repeats there. He thinks Prayer (that I mean which is appointed in the *Liturgy*) but an idle Office, and his time loſt at this without Preaching. He thinks himſelf an extraordinary Chriſtian, and his Neighbours generally think him ſo too, when indeed he has no true Religion in him. He knows nothing of Meekneſs, Humility, Charity, and Self-denial, in Confeſſion and Contrition; but ſpends his time in loud talk, and comparing of others together. Pride and Curioſity (thoſe curſed Vices that threw *Adam* out of *Paradiſe*) inſpire him, and his Ears itch, and he runs after the Canting

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Seller of Breath to gratifie them, and then thinks he has ſufficiently ſerv'd God for that time.

3. The Critical Cenſorious Hearer; and he is firſt a Critick, and when grown bold and improv'd, becomes a Cenſurer. He hears only to judge, and give his Opinion. One is dull, another cold; this want's Life and Heat, and the other Art in his Compoſitions; and a third Elocution. He finds ſome fault or other with moſt, and commends but few beſides himſelf, whom he inſinuates able to teach them all. He is a bad Member of a Church, and one who may do a great deal of miſchief, and a worſe Chriſtian, as guilty of much partiality and uncharitableneſs.

I was about to add a fourth, and that is the Envious Hearer, who comes to Church like the Devil, as a Spy to catch at any indecent Expreſſion of the *Miniſter*, and to expoſe him to the cenſure of the Scornful: Who will endeavour to miſrepreſent his Words, and mimick his Geſtures and Actions to ridicule him. But upon ſecond thought, my Charity prompts me to believe, that there are but few of theſe amongſt us.

III. After all, theſe of our Saviour's, and our fruitleſs and ſinful Hearers, the truly Chriſtian and edified Hearer is quite another thing. His Heart (like the good Ground) is tender, humble, and modeſt; and all Vices, but eſpecially Pride and Vain-glory, are rooted up and mortified. His coming to the Houſe of God is out of an Honeſt and Religious deſign, to learn how

how to conquer himſelf, ſubdue his brutiſh Paſſions and Affections, looſe himſelf from his ſinful Habits, and the Cords of Vanity wherewith he is entangled both by Nature and Practice; and ſo ſerve God and his Neighbour the better. To this purpoſe he is not curious as to the Inſtrument of Preaching, or the way of its Delivery, or Compoſure; and meddles not with his Phraſe, manner of Speech, or Elocution. He preferrs his own *Pariſh Prieſt*, as having a ſpecial Charge over him, and as being his Spiritual Father. But whoſoever it is that Preaches, he hearkens attentively, reverently, and ſilently, and applies it to himſelf; and having made his own uſes (as often as he finds occaſion) for Inſtruction, Correction, and Comfort, you may ſee the Fruits and Effects of it. And thus he imitates Nature, and having received wholſome Food into a good Heart, digeſts it ſeveral times, and then repairs with it the Breaches of his daily Infirmities.

IV. Let then the Concluſion be our Lord's *Caveat. Take heed therefore how ye hear.* And that ye may do this, come to the Houſe of God with a deſign to be Inſtructed, and a full reſolution to act accordingly. Take a ſtrict account of your prevailing Sins, and your defects of neceſſary Graces, what they are your progreſs or decreaſe in Virtue, and the ſtate of your Soul, that you may know what to ask in your Prayers, and what more eſpecially to remark in the Inſtructions both of Reading and Preaching. Let your Prayers be that you may receive ſeaſonable Convictions in your Hearing, and let your Hearing be that you may pray and

live

live better; and let your Reſolution be peremptory and determinate, that you will do ſo. Hearken with all diligence, as you wou'd do to your Father's Laſt Will and Teſtament; or to the Deeds and Securities of your Eſtate, and (as you go along with the Preacher) make reflections on your ſelf, and your own Soul from the words he utters; lay your Hand upon your own Breaſt, when there is occaſion for it, and ſay, *Thou art the Man.* Let not the ſound of the words, and the Paſſion or Geſture of the Preacher, but the ſenſe of them and his deſign and drift in the whole work upon thee. For thou art a Man (that is) a Rational Creature, and oughteſt to be mov'd with Reaſon, and not Paſſions and Affections, which operate only on Fools and Children. Do not dwell upon any Externals, or Ornaments of Speech; but look into the inſide and meaning of it. And tho' Rhetorick be excellent to make Impreſſions upon an Auditor, and ſoft Language and a winning Meen doth wonderfully commend the Heavenly Orator; yet right Reaſon, and the weight of Spiritual Arguments makes the greater Impreſſion upon Wiſe Men. However, remember that theſe are but Ornaments of Speech, and thou haſt no Authority, no nor time to cenſure or judge any thing about them. Nor indeed is the Preacher much better as to the Eſſence of Preaching, for theſe Garnitures, or much worſe if he wants them. The Devil is very buſie at that time, eſpecially to divert our Minds to other Objects, or to the leſs ſignificant Circumſtances of the Objects we are imploy'd in; or to produce in us a contempt of the Preacher's Perſon, his manner of Speaking, or the Matter of his Ser-

Sermon; and all this that he might the eaſier rob us of the benefit of it. And therefore look beyond the Inſtrument to the Author of Religion, and remember his End, which is to teach thee the way to obtain everlaſting Life: Let that always be in thine Eye, and act accordingly. Otherwiſe the Sermons which thou either haſt or might'ſt have heard, will turn into ſo many Impeachments and Evidences againſt thee in the laſt Day, and will increaſe thy Condemnation. Do therefore as thou ſhould'ſt do at a plentiful Feaſt, where there be great Varieties. If any Diſh ſeems not to be well Dreſt, or agrees not with thy Appetite, paſs it by, and take of that which is moſt proper and agreeable. It may be another will like that which thou refuſeſt. So here, If the Matter or Words of ſome part ſeem not ſo ſutable, take more ſpecial notice of that which concerns thee. Carry home that, and apply it to thy beſt advantage. In a word; So hear, that thou may'ſt Profit and grow better. And ſo much of the ſecond Duty to be perform'd in the Publick Aſſemblies, which is Inſtruction by Reading or Expounding the Word of God, which we uſually call Preaching.

CHAP.

CHAP. XIII.

Of the Sacraments.

I. THere is a third part of our Work in the Houſe of God yet remaining to be Spoken to, and that is the receiving of the Signs and Seals of our Duty and Reward, the Two Sacraments of *Baptiſm* and the *Lord's-Supper*: Of which I ſhall ſpeak only briefly and in general. For it cannot be expected here, that I ſhou'd treat of their Inſtitutions, Natures, Definitions, Diviſions, and their ſeveral Branches, together with the numerous Applications of theſe to our uſes. This has been the Subject of large Volumes, and God be thanked, there is no need of it at this time of the Day, when there are Books almoſt innumerable Publiſhed about them, and they make a part in all *Catechiſms*, and *Syſtems* of *Divinity*. I ſhall therefore ſpeak of them ſo far forth as they are us'd in the Publick Service of God, and with reference to preſent Practice; and that with all the plainneſs and clearneſs of Expreſſion I can think of, conſidering the Capacities of thoſe who are chiefly aim'd at in theſe Papers.

II. As in Nature a Man is but once Born into the World, but every Day nouriſhed and ſupplied with Food to repair his daily Decays, that he may reach his deſign'd Stature, and continue

tinue till he is call'd out of the World again. So in Religion, a Chriſtian is firſt entred into Chriſt's Church, and regenerated by Water and the Spirit, and this but once; but then he is daily to be nouriſhed and ſtrengthned in the ſame, againſt the Body of Sin, his natural Inclinations, his Luſts and Appetites, till Chriſt be form'd in him, and he grows up into a perfect Man in Knowledge and Practice. And this is his Duty, during his abode on Earth, till he is call'd hence to receive his Reward in the other State. Now, the Sacred Ceremony of the Spiritual Birth is *Baptiſm*, call'd generally of the Ancients Regeneration, or the Spiritual or ſecond Birth, as that of our Nutrition, is the *Lord's Supper*. The firſt anſwers to our Natural Birth, which is once; and the ſecond to our daily Bread for Suſtentation, and that is often. And the place where both theſe are regularly and generally performed, is that of the Chriſtian Aſſemblies, which we call the Church.

Baptiſm is the Sacrament of Initiation, or the Door by which we are admitted into the Covenant of Grace. And therefore the *Font* anciently ſtood (as it doth commonly to this Day) in the firſt and loweſt part of the Church, near the Entrance, as an Emblem of the uſe of Baptiſm, which was to receive Perſons into the Church of Chriſt, by the uſe of Waſhing and Prayer. The time of our Age, when we paſs thro' this ſecond Birth, is generally ſoon after we have paſſed thro' our firſt, the time of our Infancy and Innocency. We are brought to Chriſt by the Charitable help of our Parents and Undertakers, and are Dedicated to his Service from our Births, by the Hands of thoſe

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that have the greateſt right in us; and we are made his before we are our own. This has been now a long time the general practice ever ſince the Church has been full, and Nations converted to Chriſt, concerning which give me leave in reference to Practice, to leave theſe two things to the Chriſtian Reader.

III. 1. From the manner of our Reception into Chriſt's Church, by Waſhing, and the Terms and Conditions of the ſame (that of Renunciation of the Devil, the World and the Fleſh, that of Faith or believing all the Articles of the Chriſtian Religion, and that of Obedience to God's Laws all the days of our Life) we are to remember, that the outward Signs are nothing without the things ſignified, which are the cleanſing of our ſelves from all ſinful Pollutions of Body and Spirit, and living as clean and new Creatures. And that the advantages of *Baptiſm* are no more ours, than the Conditions of Renouncing and Believing, and Serving are ours alſo. That there is an outward and inward Baptiſm, and it is this laſt that doth ſave us, not the cleanſing of the Body by Water, but (that which is ſignified by it, which is) the Obſervation of the promiſed anſwer *of a good Conſcience towards God.* That tho' the Ceremony of Baptiſm be tranſient and ſoon over, yet the effect of it continues all our Days, and without this, the other is inſignificant. And here I cannot but obſerve, with ſome diſpleaſure, as well as concern, the common Miſtakes of our ordinary ſort of Chriſtians in this Matter. They look upon Infant Baptiſm only as an old laudable Ceremony, and think it is finiſhed

(opere operato) in the outward Work. And the *Sponſors* or *Undertakers* for the Child ſtand demurely and make an expreſs or implicite Anſwer to the Queſtions put to them in the behalf of the Child, and then they think they have done their Work. But both they and the *Parents* ſhould conſider, that it is both their Duties to take care of the Chriſtian Education and Inſtruction of the Child in thoſe things they have promiſed in his Name, and when he comes of Age to ſee him actually take them upon himſelf in the preſence of the *Biſhop*, which we call *Confirmation*. And the Child, when he comes to Years of Underſtanding ſhou'd remember, that as the Charity of others brought him to Chriſt for his Bleſſing, before he cou'd come himſelf; ſo 'tis his Duty, if ever he hopes for the Benefits of ſuch a Bleſſing, to obſerve the Promiſes made by his Undertakers in his Name, and perform the Conditions they have entred into in his behalf: Otherwiſe (notwithſtanding his outward Baptiſm) never to hope for the Advantages and Privileges thereof, which are no leſs than *to be made a Member of Chriſt, a Child of God, and an Inheritor of the Kingdom of Heaven.*

And if this were more generally known and conſidered; and for that purpoſe was more frequently inculcated into the Minds of ordinary People, they wou'd better underſtand their Baptiſmal Vow, and obſerve it. Nor wou'd *Infant Baptiſm* be ſcandaliz'd and ridicul'd by a ſort of Men that have deſerted that Church, of which they never were worthy to be Members, and diſclaim'd that *Baptiſm* which they never underſtood.

IV.

IV. 2. From the place appointed for the Reception of Baptiſm, I will obſerve, and leave with the Reader this Intimation. That it wou'd be very convenient if this initiatory Sacrament were made (by a due Obſervation of the Time and Place proper to it) as publick as it is poſſible * that the Infant or grown Perſon might conſtantly (but in caſes of Neceſſity) be admitted into Chriſt's Church in the preſence of the Congregation, and in the time of the ſolemn Aſſembly; that ſo there may be ſufficient Witneſſes of the Perſon's admiſſion, and that the Spectators might be admoniſhed of their former Engagements to their Duty, and of the performance of the ſame. And accordingly that Parents (of what degrees ſoever) wou'd not think much to bring their Infants to Chriſt, to his own Houſe, or fear that they ſhou'd take Cold in the way, or the outward Ceremony of Waſhing there. This is the effect of plain Infidelity, as the other of Pride. And finally, that the grown Perſon, who has not been Baptized in his Infancy, wou'd not be aſham'd to put on Chriſt publickly, and own him before all Men, by partaking of this Ceremony, which was not adminiſtred to him before.

* Vid. *Rubrick of Publick Baptiſm.*

And indeed, there is nothing ſo contrary to the Dignity of this Sacrament, or the Devout Adminiſtration of the ſame, than the exhibiting it in private Houſes, and there generally amongſt rude Perſons or Children, noiſe and interuption. This leſſens this Holy Ordinance, and makes it look Mean, as well as the *Adminiſtrators*

ſtrators of it. And yet, as improper as it is, it muſt ſometimes be ſo; when careful Parents will not ſuffer their dying Children to want this neceſſary initiating Ordinance into Chriſt's Church, and ſo make them capable of the Kingdom of Heaven; then 'tis a Pious and Charitable Work to go home to them that cannot be brought to us. But when theſe *Domeſtick Baptiſms* are not the effect of any Neceſſity, but of Pride and Singularity (which will be attended above other things) of Infidelity, which fears taking Cold, as as tho' God wou'd be wanting in his own Ordinance, and ſo not take care of his Infant Proſelyte;) or laſtly, of Indifference, as tho' if Baptiſm cou'd not be had at home, it might be deferr'd, perhaps not receiv'd at all; I ſay, when it is the effect of either of theſe, why ſhou'd it be comply'd with, even to the deſerting the Church and the *Baptiſmal Font* there, which now in ſome places begins to ſtand uſeleſs, and might be ſpar'd. Will the Parents become Angry and Obſtinate upon ſuch refuſal, and ſo in a Paſſion deny their Infants this Ordinance at Church, becauſe they may not have it at home? No ſurely, Paſſion will not laſt long, nor become ſo unjuſt as to ſpend it ſelf upon our own Innocent Offſpring. It were therefore, I conceive much better, if the *Adminiſtrators* of this Sacrament wou'd ſtand upon the regular way and (unleſs in caſe of great Neceſſity) poſitively reſolve againſt private Baptiſms. And, I'm perſuaded, they wou'd find in a ſhort time as many Perſons Baptized at Church, as now they do at home, and as many Friends too, who, tho' they might perhaps take it ill at the firſt time, yet cou'd not chuſe but reverence them for their Integrity and

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Conſtancy in ſo reaſonable a Reſolution. And this is all I think neceſſary to be ſaid in this place of the firſt Sacrament to be adminiſter'd in the Church, *viz. Baptiſm.*

V. As for the *Lord's-Supper*, the other Sacrament of Chriſt's Inſtitution, it is like Food, often to be receiv'd for our Spiritual Nouriſhment, and never with more Congruity and Decency than in publick Places of Divine Worſhip, in the Church, in the upper end of which there is a *Table* appointed for it. It is fitly eſteem'd the moſt Sacred and moſt myſterious part of God's Service, in which we draw ſo near him, as to be united to him. 'Tis the moſt Edifying, Improving and Peace-making Ordinance in it ſelf, and tends to Unity and Love. And yet about this there have been more Controverſies ſtirr'd up than any other. And theſe have made more Diviſions in the Church, than the Devout uſe of it cou'd heal up. It has been made the *Shibboleth* of Life and Death; and the means of delivering over *to Fire and Faggot.* A certain number of Men, in the Council of *Lateran*, firſt imagin'd to themſelves, and then concluded a *modus* in this Myſtery, and then impos'd their Conceptions upon all others. All upon pain of Death muſt Swear that they likewiſe believed it, tho' they cou'd not comprehend it. And if they wou'd not lye againſt their own Knowledge, but confeſs the Truth (that they did not, and cou'd not) then they muſt be deliver'd over to the *Secular Magiſtrates*, and be burnt for *Hereticks.* Their Crime (if any) being only a fault in their Underſtandings. And this was one of the chief Artifices of the Devil,

to tempt Men to Murther one another with that which God deſign'd to be the Means and Inſtrument of their Salvation. And then (ſince that time) others have ſo refin'd and ſubtiliz'd on this Sacrament, that they have made it utterly unintelligible and unpracticable, and this way the Devil hath form'd a pretence to fright Men from the uſe of it. How many and how fatal are his Devices, and how ſucceſsful hath he been in both! I ſhall ſweep away altogether the Duſt and Rubbiſh of Contentions, Diſputes, Sophiſtry, and unintelligible Myſteries, and endeavour to give a clear and plain account of its Nature and Inſtitution.

VI. Our bleſſed Lord, in the *Veſpers* of his Death, before he was Crucifi'd, reſolv'd to Inſtitute a Sacred Ceremony, and leave it with them to be us'd often, by which his approaching Death might be as annunciated and commemorated. He did not think that the Written, Hiſtorical part of the Goſpels alone wou'd be ſufficient to continue the Memorial of his Love; but as his *Father* did in the *Paſſover*, and other Ordinances to the *Jews*, ſo he (by certain ſenſible ſigns of his Sufferings and Repreſentations of his kindneſs often to be us'd) did order the ſhewing forth of his Death, and the keeping it in remembrance amongſt the Chriſtians, till his coming again to Judgment. Beſides, he intended theſe to be not only ſigns but Means, Seals, Pledges, and Aſſurances of the Benefits we were to receive by his Paſſion. The *Medium* or Conduit-Pipe to convey his Merits to us: A Pledge or Pawn that we ſhall receive them and his Seal left upon Earth as our aſſurance that we ſhall en-

enjoy them while he is abſent from us in Heaven. All this is implied in this Sacrament, and was the end of its Inſtitution. To this end having finiſhed the Paſſover with his Diſciples, according to the *Jewiſh* Cuſtom. He took and accommodated the *Poſtcœnium* (that is the *Jewiſh* Cuſtom of Conſecrating and delivering Bread and Wine about the Table to the Gueſts in the end of their Feaſts) and converted it to an *Evangelical Sacrament*. And accordingly he took Bread and Wine bleſſed it, and delivered it to his Diſciples, uſing a form of Words, agreeable to that which was us'd in the Paſſover. *This is the Bread of Afflictions which our Fathers eat in Egypt*, &c. So our Saviour, *This is my Body*. As the Paſchal Lamb was us'd to be call'd the Body of the Paſſover, and as the Bread was call'd the Bread of Affliction, which the *Iſraelites* eat in *Egypt*, becauſe it was a Memorial of it; ſo this he call'd his Body, becauſe intended to be both a *Symbol* to repreſent it, and a *Memorial* of it. And as in the Paſſover they us'd to bleſs and deliver the Cup, with ſaying, *This is the Fruit of the Vine, and the Blood of the Grape*. So he calls the Cup of Wine which he had bleſſed (according to the *Jewiſh* Cuſtom in that Feaſt) his Blood, and (with reference to that of *Moſes*, *Exod.* 24. 8.) *This is my Blood of the New Covenant*, or as St. *Paul* renders it, *This is the New Covenant or Teſtament in my Blood*. As the old Covenant was ſeal'd with Blood; ſo the New Covenant which I have procured of my Father, ſhall be ſeal'd with my Blood, of which this is the *Symbol* and Repreſentation. Laſtly, The diſtribution of the Bread and Wine is the *Symbol*, Sign and Seal of the Communication of the Bo-

dy and Blood of Chriſt to every Worthy Communicant who ſhall repreſent and declare his Paſſion, and its effects by this Eating and Drinking. *Do this therefore often; and as often as ye do it, let it be in remembrance of me, and what I have done for you*, &c.

And if we may compare ſmall things to great, and illuſtrate this thing by an Example, let it be this. A Great and Good Man, at infinite Pains and Charge, Founds a free *Corporation*, *College*, or *Fraternity*; and Endows it with large Poſſeſſions and great Privileges. Orders the Members to be admitted by Waſhing, and to live under certain Rules and Obſervations: And the whole Community to meet all together as often as they cou'd, and the *Governours* ſhould direct, at a common Feaſt of Love, and there not only read the *Laws* and *Statutes* of the Donation; but repreſent the manner of the *Donor's* departure, his Acts and Suffering to procure this Foundation for them. And this by ſuch ſignificant *Emblems* that might beſt expreſs the ſame, of which he, immediately before his Deceaſe, gave them a *Specimen* or Example. And this to be obſerv'd, as their Tenure and Title to the Privileges and Advantages of this *Brotherhood*. Thus did our Lord, and infinitely more than any Inſtance can ſhadow out. He hath incorporated us into the *Brotherhood* of Chriſtianity, and the advantages thereof. Theſe he purchaſed with his own Life, and with the Sufferings of his Body and Blood: And he left order with his Diſciples, to continue what he began juſt before his Death, *viz.* a Commemoration of the ſame, expreſs'd by Eating Bread, and Drinking Wine; *Symbols* which he then appointed

pointed to repreſent his Body and Blood; and this with aſſurance, that if we do it according to his Inſtitution, the Sufferings of both ſhall become *verily* and *indeed* ours, to all Intents and Purpoſes, as if we our ſelves had done and ſuffered the ſame in our own Perſons, to the ſatisfaction of the Divine Juſtice. And this performance ſhall not only be the Sign but the *Medium*, the Seal, Aſſurance, and Pledge for the enjoyment of all the Privileges and Immunities of Chriſtianity which belong to us, as Sons here or hereafter.

This is a plain and eaſie Account of this Holy Inſtitution, which by the perverſeneſs of Man and Policy of the Devil hath diſquieted and divided the Church, which it was deſign'd to unite. And this is my preſent Notion of it. But if any more improv'd and heighten'd Chriſtian can ſee further into this *Myſtery*, and comprehend any true and intelligible *Notion* of the *Hoc eſt Corpus meum*, beyond that which is *Figurative* and *Symbolical* (ſuch are ſome of thoſe high Names the *Ancient Fathers* give the Bread and Wine after Conſecration, as tho' chang'd from what it was before (tho' never ſo far as *Tranſubſtantiation* or change of their Subſtances) I ſhall not contend with him.

As for me and others of no more refin'd Intellects, I hope the Notion above explain'd is ſufficient. For I am perſuaded that God will never oblige any Man to profeſs he believes that which in reality he doth not. And thus having given this general and ſhort account of the Nature, Deſign, and End of this Sacrament, give me leave to become more parti-

cular, and ſpeak of the Practice of it as us'd in the Church, by treating of the right manner of Preparation and Participation, and the great Neceſſity that lies upon every Chriſtian not to intermit much leſs, lay aſide the uſe of the ſame.

CHAP.

CHAP. XIV.

Of due Preparation to the Holy Sacrament of the Lord's-Supper.

AND here I muſt confeſs, I might well think my ſelf excus'd from ſaying any more of this Subject, by the many and *Excellent Books* and *Sermons* publiſh'd thereon, to which it is impoſſible for me to add any thing, or indeed to come up to their heights. And yet I remember that (according to my Promiſe) 'tis neceſſary to ſay ſomething more on this Head, and this Book will be imperfect without it. And who knows but this may fall into the Hands of thoſe that have not the others? Beſides I write to the more dull unconcern'd, and indifferent ſort; and if I can but awake theſe to Duty, they may ſoon be directed to thoſe that have writ with more *Spirit* and *Flame* on this Subject. I ſhall therefore be but ſhort, and content my ſelf to follow the foot-ſteps of the Church in her directions and practice, both as to Preparation and Participation, whilſt others add thereunto their peculiar flights of Devotion, and the Raptures of Divine Love, that this Sacrament exhibits to us; it will be ſufficient for me to attend the door of the Houſe of God, and invite in as many as I can, whilſt others conduct them thence to higher *Myſteries and Glories.*

1. To

1. To begin then with the first, *viz.* necessary Preparation. All things require some previous Preparations, and even a Marriage-Feast, a *Wedding-Garment*. Much more Religious Duties, amongst which this is the most Solemn and Mysterious: For there we are to meet God and the Holy Angels, and Dine in their Presence and Company. 'Tis therefore necessary that the inward (as well as outward) Man shou'd be dress'd up, Purified and Sanctified. The great *Apostle* of our Gentile World, orders every Man to *Examine* and *Prove* (so as to approve) *himself*, so the word in the Original will signifie. Let him search into the State of his Soul, into his Inclinations and Habits; into his Progress or Regress in Piety. Let him find the true State of the Accounts betwixt God and himself, adjust, and set even every thing betwixt them. Let him rectifie what is amiss, and put his Soul into that State and Frame that is fit for such a Duty. And let him not leave dressing and altering his Soul, till he approves of it, as a fit guess for such a Heavenly Banquet. For he that is unprepar'd in his own Eyes by impenitency, must not approach to that Heavenly Table. Thus the *Apostle*, and the Church is more particular, and mentions the Objects of this self Examination. That it shou'd be,

First, *Whether he truly repents him of his former Sins, stedfastly purposing to lead a new Life.*

Secondly, *Whether he have a lively Faith in God's Mercy through Christ.*

Thirdly,

Thirdly, *And a thankful remembrance of Christ's Death. And,*

Fourthly, *Whether he be in Charity with all Men.*

Of each of which briefly in their Order.

2. *First*, The first Object of our Examination ought to be about our *Repentance.* In Baptism we are admitted into Christ's Church, upon a threefold Vow or Promise. The first of *Renouncing the Devil, the Wickedness of the World, and the Sins of the Flesh.* The second, of believing the *Articles of our Faith, and the* third *of observing God's Holy Will and Commandments* Now forasmuch as every Man is Flesh and Blood, and is mov'd by Appetites and Passions, which sometimes will hurry him into the commission of that which is contrary to Reason, and the Spirit of God, and consequently to act contrary to this Vow. It is therefore requisite that there shou'd be sometimes a renewal of our said Vows, and of Examination into these breaches and lapses in order thereunto. And because every Man is a Sinner, in the former respects, and no Man can truly say, he has at all times inviolably observed his Baptismal Vow (and indeed it is morally impossible it can be wholly otherwise) therefore God has mercifully allow'd him a Medicine for this Malady, a help for this imperfection, and this is *Repentance.* This if true and rightly applyed, will render him sound and healthful again, and justifie him as tho' he had never sin'd. It will through the Mercies of God, and Merits of Christ, blot out all

all ſins, and render the Perſon Juſt before God, as tho' he had never offended. And becauſe there be many falſe and pretended *Repentances*, or rather thoſe that challenge this Name, and yet are none of this. The firſt thing that a Man ſhou'd ſearch after in this time of Holy Inquiſition, ſhou'd be into the Nature and Truth of his Solemn and Serious *Repentances*. For, if this be faulty, it can do us no good but hurt, and is a ſin to be repented of. The Church then upon good grounds, ſuppoſes every Man at that time eſpecially, ſhou'd examine himſelf concerning the Sincerity, Truth, and Validity of his former and preſent *Repentances*. Whether his Mind be not truly convinc'd of the guilt and danger of his Vices, and he hath accordingly taken off his Affections from the former eager purſuit of even thoſe that were moſt beloved. Whether he hath lamented his own weakneſs and indiſcretion in being overcome by the temptation, and confeſſed them before God with ſhame and Sorrow. And laſtly, whether he comes to his Holy Service with a full Reſolution and Purpoſe to lead a new Life, without any ſecret Reſerve or Exception to any darling Wickedneſs. This is worthily the firſt Object of our Solemn Examination, in Order to this Sacrament.

Thirdly, 2. And the ſecond is of our Faith, which the Church expreſſes by *having a lively Faith in God's Mercies through Chriſt*. Thereby teaching us, that the worthy Communicant muſt not only give his ready Aſſent to all the Doctrines and Diſcoveries of God's Will in Revealed Religion; but depend on thoſe Promiſes that he hath made to Penitent Sinners. And that for his own part he ſhou'd come

to this Sacrament with a full perſuaſion that all the Merits of Chriſt ſhall be made over to him, and be his own, if he acts penitently and Receives as he ought to do. For this Sacrament is not only a Sign but a Seal and Pledge given by God to Man of all the Mercies he conveys to him in Chriſt Crucified; and he that participates in this Sacrament, muſt receive it as ſuch, or elſe he contradicts himſelf in the very Act, and gives God the Lye, as doubting his Truth and Faithfulneſs. And therefore *whoſoever comes to God, muſt believe that he is a Rewarder of thoſe that ſeek him.* And in all Addreſſes to him Faith is required as a Condition, where a Woe is denounc'd *againſt the faint-hearted and him that goes two ways.* Nor can he that doubteth whether this Holy Sacrament has any Virtue annext to it, or that it will do him more good than ordinary meals, hope to receive any benefit by it.

Fourthly, 3. The third Object of Examination is of our thankfulneſs. Whether we do intend to approach the Lord's Table as to a Commemorative Sacrifice *to ſhew forth the Lord's Death till he come again.* 'Twas the Sin of the *Corinthians* that they prophanely and preſumptuouſly participated of the Conſecrated Elements as common Meat and Drink, and that they did not diſcern or diſtinguiſh the *Lord's Body* from their ordinary Nutriment: And the Apoſtle therefore ſays, ſuch unworthy Communicants *eat and drink Damnation* or Judgment to themſelves. But the Devout Chriſtian ſhou'd diſcriminate this from their ordinary Meals, and eat and drink it accordingly with Fear, Reverence and Thankſgiving, *viz.* as a thankful remembrance of his Death and Paſſion.

Fifthly,

Fifthly, 4. And becauſe every good Chriſtian ought to be like God, who is kind to all, even to the unjuſt and unthankful, the fourth thing to be enquired into at that time, is his Univerſal Charity. *That be in Charity with all Men.* He ought then eſpecially, as well as at all times, actually forgive thoſe that acknowledge their injuries; and ſtand ready to forgive thoſe that will not; and pray for them that they may be Penitents, and ſo may receive forgiveneſs at God's Hands as well as at his own. There ſhou'd be always ſuch an Univerſal Charity towards all Men of all Nations, Sects, Religions, Enemies as well as well as Friends, that ſhou'd carry us on to do them all the good we can poſſibly in reſpect of their Souls, Bodies, Eſtates and good Names, and the breaches of any of theſe are to be the Object of our then particular Examination, and of our Satisfaction, and ſo if poſſible, of our Reconciliation to them. For this Sacrament is a builder up of Breaches, and an Ordinance of Union and Reconciliation. And *if thou bring thy gift to the Alar, and then remembereſt that thy Adverſary hath ought againſt thee* [for any injury done him] *leave thy gift there and go* [and by a due Confeſſion and Satisfaction do thy part to] *be reconcil'd to thine Adverſary, and then come with* Confidence and Comfort, *and offer thy Gift*, and God will accept it. Pride, Ignorance, Intereſt and Self-love together with our other Paſſions, do oftentime betray us into Injuries, and therefore (as the Church directs) *if our offences are ſuch that are not only againſt God, but our Neighbour alſo, then we ought to reconcile our ſelves unto them by tendering Reſtitntion and Satisfaction to the uttermoſt of our Powers for all Injurier and*

Exhort to the *Communion*, &c.

and Wrongs done by us to any other. And if we have receiv'd any Injuries from others, we muſt declare our readineſs to forgive them, as we would have forgiveneſs at God's Hand.

6. Theſe are the chief Preparations, and they are highly reaſonable at all times, and eſpecially in our Applications to God and every time we uſe the Lord's Prayer. *Forgive us our treſpaſſes as we forgive them that treſpaſs againſt us*, &c. But particularly in this chiefeſt Myſtery and higheſt part of Divine Service. Otherwiſe the Communicant ſhews himſelf Prophane, Bold, and Inſolent, and and comes into God's Preſence to affront him. And therefore no wonder our Lord was ſo ſevere againſt the Perſon without *this Wedding Garment*, or that his Apoſtle ſays, ſuch Judge and Condemn themſelves in the very act of Communicating. Why, *'tis a not diſcerning*, or rather an abuſe *of the Lord's Body*, when diſcerned! Indeed 'tis no more than what is neceſſary to every good and peaceable Man. And he muſt needs be a very ill Chriſtian, and an ill Man, that at any time is Prophane, Impious, Envious, Malicious, or given over to Senſuality. An Atheiſt in Opinion or Practice, or an Envious Wretch which wou'd willingly ruine and deſtroy his Neighbour. This is a Character few wou'd own at any time; and therefore 'tis but reaſonable it ſhou'd be laid aſide, at the time we approach the God of Love and of Purity at his Table.

7. And as this is reaſonable in it ſelf, ſo will it be neither tedious nor troubleſome. It will not take up ſo much time as we beſtow on our Pleaſures and Vanities; the Preparations to which are more

more burthenſome and vexatious. A few ſhort and ſerious Conſiderations and Reflections will do it; and every Man's private Conſcience will be ready to aſſiſt him in the Work. The pooreſt and neceſſitous Labourer may find time enough for this at Night when his Work is done, or on his Pillow, or in the Morning, or as he goes to his Work, or at his Work it ſelf, or rather at certain times in all theſe, if he will but give himſelf leave to think of his Spiritual State, as ſeriouſly as he uſually doth of his Temporal. And the moſt ſolemn Preparations which are Piouſly intended for the aſſiſtance of the Devout, are yet no conſiderable hinderances of the neceſſary Works of our Calling. Add to this, when once a due Preparation is made, 'tis eaſily renew'd again, and when the Cords of Senſuality and Vanity are once broken, the Work ſtill becomes more eaſie. A Habit of Piety and Holy Life, requires little or no Preparation, as a continual State of Health no Phyſick, unleſs by way of Prevention. He is always prepar'd to participate that is prepar'd to die. He that always has a *Wedding-Garment* on, and *Watches with Lamps burning, is ready at every hour to go in to the Wedding with the Bridegroom*, and ſhall find welcom there. The Factor that keeps his daily Accounts exactly, need not fear to be called to give 'em up at any time. The *Primitive Chriſtians* receiv'd it every day in the courſe of Divine Service, and therefore as they cou'd not make, ſo they needed not ſuch formal Preparations. And the *Church* in her laſt Exhortation immediately before the Participation, doth at leaſt ſuppoſe ſuch a preparation (if it be ſerious and in earneſt) to be finiſhed in a ſhort time. But this conſideration is not deſign'd to encourage the Protractors

tractors and Delayers of due Preparation, but to animate them to it. That which is so dangerous to be omitted, is dangerous to be delay'd.

8. To this purpose I cannot but commend the Pious Care of our Church, for our due Preparation before this Holy Action, which she manifests both by Exhortations and Exercises. For first, notice is given of it some days before, and the Advantages of the worthy Reception, as also the dangers of the Unworthy laid down before the People, with short and yet full Directions how to become Worthy Receivers. The Ways and Means of *Examination, Repentance, Satisfaction, Restitution, and forgiving Enemies* and injurious Persons, are plainly and fully describ'd, and the Means to quiet guilty Consciences are set down. And then in the other Exhortation, the People are stirr'd up by the most effectual Arguments, not to neglect this great, and necessary Ordinance. And lest all this shou'd not be sufficient, in a third Exhortation immediately before the *Participation*, she again deters the unprepar'd, and exhorts us to finish our Preparations from the Imminent danger of Prophaneness, and the great advantage of a Devout and Pious *Participation*; tells the History of the Institution, and the Ends of it; Exhorts us to Thankfulness, and then invites the truly Penitent and Reconcil'd Christians. Those only, that are *in Love and Charity with their Neighbours, and henceforth intend to lead a New Life, to draw near with Faith, and to receive this Sacrament to their Comfort.* Nor doth she only Exhort her Children to the necessary Preparations of that Duty, but Exercises them in *Holy Forms of Contrition, Confession, and Repentance.* She directs us to repeat

every Commandment on our knees, and ſubjoyns a ſhort, but full Confeſſion and Prayer for Pardon and future aſſiſtance to each Commandment, *Lord have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep this Law.* And then ſhe appoints a *general and ſpecial Confeſſion of Sins* to be made by the *Communicants* upon their knees at the Lord's Table, in words full of Contrition, Compunction, Faith, Holy Vows and Reſolutions of Amendment. So that if we wou'd but obſerve her Exhortations, Directions, Methods, or Exerciſes, there wou'd be no danger of receiving Unworthily. And thus much I think ſufficient to be ſaid of the firſt thing, viz. *Preparation.*

CHAP.

CHAP. XV.

Of Participation or Receiving the Holy Communion.

I. FOR the other part, which I call *Participation*, or the Communion it ſelf. When the day is come wherein we are to participate of the true Chriſtian Feaſt, Eat with our Lord and his Family, *and of him*: Let ſuch thoughts employ the Pious Communicants Mind, as I preſcrib'd in the entrance to Prayers. Let him renew and repeat thoſe *Preliminary Meditations*. Let him remember the Work that he is going about, and the *Majeſty* that he is to appear before, and attire his Soul and Mind accordingly. Let him caſt out all impure Thoughts out of his Mind, and lay aſide for that time all lawful and (otherwiſe) neceſſary Worldly buſineſs, and wholly Sequeſter his Soul to this Work of Religion. Let him pray for himſelf and others, in the Words of the good *Hezikiah*. *The good Lord Pardon every one that prepareth his Heart to ſeek the Lord, tho' he be not cleanſed according to the Purification of the Sanctuary.*

Let him endeavour (that time if poſſibly) to add to the ardency and affection of his Prayers, and to the ſerious Attention to the Inſtruction he hears either from the *Leſſons* or *Sermon*, and eſpecially let him addreſs himſelf to thoſe Devotions that are proper to the Holy Sacra-

ment. Let him reflect upon himself at every Commandment, and consider what he hath done in opposition to it, and then beg of God with the rest of the Congregation, in the words of the Church, *Pardon and future Strength to observe that Law.* Let him follow and accompany the *Minister* to the Altar. There let him heartily and sorrowfully confess his Sins, and beg *Absolution* in the excellent Form appointed for that purpose, and then from the Mouth of the *Steward of Christ's Mysteries*, let him receive *Absolution*; and (if he be sincere and truly penitent) it will be valid and effectual, as if pronounc'd by an Angel from Heaven; for so much the unerring Lips of our blessed Lord (more to be credited and depended on than that of Angels) hath promised to true Penitents, to be pronounc'd by his *Ministers.* And therefore he hath all the reason in the World from the inward Consolation of his Soul upon the Forgiveness of his Sins (as well as from the Work that he is about, and the kind Invitations from Christ which he hears repeated) *to lift up his Heart unto the Lord, and give him Thanks not only for all his Mercies in general, but for the peculiar Mercies of that Feast*, the Celebration of the Communion shall fall in with. And to this purpose he has all the reason in the World to join *with Angels and Arch-Angels, and all the Company of Heaven in that Heavenly Hymn called the Trisagion*, the Song of the Angels which *Isaiah* heard them sing, in which the Church has directed in this place, *to give Glory to each Person in the adorable Trinity.* And after he has made his humble Apology for his bold approach to that Table, where Angels are Attendants

and

and Admirers; and beg'd once more that the Body and Blood of Christ may be to him a means of *Purification*, *Sanctification*, and *Salvation* in a Prayer appointed to that purpose, and uttered by the Priest in his own Name, and in the Name of the rest of the Congregation, let him silently and devoutly attend the Prayer of *Consecration*.

II. When the *Elements* are *Consecrated* (that is) set a part Dedicated to a Divine use, and made what our Lord intended them; let the Devout Communicant look no more upon them as common Bread and Wine, but as the *Symbols* and Representations of the Body and Blood of Christ, and that very properly. *Bread* is the Staff of Life, and that which the Substance of the Body chiefly consists of; *Wine* is a Liquor repleniſhed with Spirits, fitly representing and easily convertible into Blood. The Institution makes 'em represent Christ's Body and Blood; and the breaking of the one, and the pouring out of the other, the wounding of his Body and the pouring out of his Blood in his Sufferings. And then the Receiving, Eating, and Drinking of these *Symbols*, to be assimilated and made part of our selves, doth well express and signifie, seal and assure to us the Merits and Sufferings of Christ Crucified to be communicated, assimilated, and made our own selves, as the Bread and Wine is. Indeed, the *whole thing* is a plain and lively Picture and Emblem of Christ suffering for us, and we in him. This in my Judgment is a plain and easie Account of this *Symbolic Representation* of these three things. 1. The Body and Blood of Christ.

2. The Sufferings of both. 3. The Communication of them to us: And he that thus apprehends the *Thing*, and applies it to himſelf, cannot but rightly diſcern the *Lord's Body*, and receive Worthily. And therefore I will not trouble my ſelf about the nature and manner of the Change, whether it be in uſe and ſignification only; or in Subſtance alſo (as ſome wou'd have it.) Let every Man believe as he can apprehend it. 'Tis ſufficient that it is *the very Body and Blood of Chriſt to me, to all Intents and Purpoſes*; and that I do hereby *verily and indeed* receive all the benefits of both. And if I cou'd receive both carnally, and ſo make the *Body and Blood of Chriſt* part of mine own by digeſtion and aſſimilation (which wou'd ſeem unnatural) yet I cou'd receive no more benefit by it, than I do by Faith now, *viz. A Communication of his Merits to me.* Let the Devout and Worthy Communicant therefore receive the Conſecrated Elements in remembrance of Chriſt's Death, and by this Act repreſent to his Mind the *Idea* and Hiſtory of his Crucified Saviour. Let him recollect his Paſſion, and remember (not without joy and comfort) that by vertue of this Communion all the effects thereof (his ſatisfaction of the Divine Juſtice for Sin) are thereby made over to him and his uſe. That his Debt is paid in the Perſon of his *Pledge*; God his Creditor is ſatisfied, and his Diſcharge ſeal'd to him; nor ſhall it (except in caſe of future Relapſes ever be requir'd of him in this World, or in that which is to come. *And this is feeding upon him in his Heart by Faith with Thanksgiving.*

III. Thus

III. Thus for the posture of Mind, and then for that of his Body (which is less considerable in this matter) let it be according to the Custom of the *Church*, of which thou art a Member. But that which is most humble, self-denying, and thankful, must be most decent: For which reason I preferr that of *our Church* (after the Pattern of *Antiquity*) as most becoming this Holy Sacrament, and those that Communicate in it. In what posture the Disciples receiv'd it at the first Institution doth not appear in Sacred History; but we may be sure it was not (that which some are so fond of, I mean) *Sitting*; because this was neither the posture of common Meals in those Days, nor of Religious Exercises. For tho' our *Translators*, in compliance to our present Custom, were pleas'd to render it thus in *English*, *He sate down with the Twelve* (*Matth.* 26. 20. *Mar.* 14. 18. *Luk.* 22. 14.) yet every Man that can understand the *Original* knows it is ἀνέκειτο, *discubuit*, he lay down with the Twelve. And it is almost as well known, that the Posture at Meals used by the *Jews* in those Times was (as amongst the *Romans*) that of *Accubation* or lying upon Beds placed about the Table. A Custom very ancient amongst them, as appears by *Ezek.* 23. 41. *Amos* 2. 8. and of which you may read the *Jewish* and *Roman Antiquities*. And I cou'd have wish'd for the *Scrupulous* sake in this point, that the *English Translators* (as also their *Painters* and *Engravers*) had represented our Saviour's last Supper as it was. This was the Posture of their ordinary Meals and Feasts; but whether it was the Posture of this Religious Institution (which took

its Original from the *Jewiſh* Cup of Bleſſing after Dinner; to which was annex'd a *long Thankſgiving* and *Prayer* I ſay) whether the *Jews*, and conſequently our Saviour and his Diſciples, at this ſo ſolemn a piece of Religion, did not change their Poſture from lying on their Beds to kneeling or ſtanding, may be gueſs'd at, but cannot be determin'd from any account in the *Sacred Hiſtory*. As for us ſeeing this Holy Action is a *principal part of Divine Adoration*, and is accompanied with the moſt Devout Prayers and Praiſes; *Our Church*, (in imitation of that which was moſt ancient and moſt pure, and in Conformity to all the moſt *regular Churches upon Earth*) hath appointed the *poſture of Kneeling*, as moſt decent and becoming ſo Divine an Action. And this may ſatisfie every Modeſt Man, who is not contentious or ſcrupulous beyond Reaſon.

IV. During the Intervals of delivering the *Conſecrated Elements*, let the Worthy Receiver entertain his Thoughts with the preſent Subject, and conſider,

1. That 'tis Inſtituted and deſign'd to be a Remembrance of *Chriſt Crucified*, as the *Paſchal Lamb* was of the *Iſraelites* delivery out of *Egypt*. And the *Symbolic* Ceremonies of Bleſſing, breaking of Bread, and pouring out Wine, Receiving, Eating, and Drinking are contriv'd to continue the Memory of the *Lord's Paſſion*, to annunciate it (that is, declare and ſet it forth) till his return to Judgment.

2. That

2. That this Annunciation or ſhewing it (as it were) over again in *Effigie*, is done in reſpect of *God* and *Man*. In reſpect of God, it is ſet forth, ſhew'd, and pleaded, as a Pardon is before a Judge. "*Behold, O God, the Death of thy* "*Son here Exhibited by ſuch Signs, as he himſelf ap-* "*pointed*; *and remember, that he was my Surety,* "*and that by his Stripes I am healed!* In reſpect of Man, we ſhew forth the Lord's Death, thereby declaring our Faith in him; and that we are Chriſtians of his Religion and Family; nor are aſham'd to confeſs him.

3. That this Holy Action is likewiſe an Emblem of a twofold Union. *Firſt*, Of that betwixt Chriſt and us. He that receives Nutriment is united to that he Eats and Drinks; and that is made part of his Body by Nutrition and Aſſimilation. We are accordingly by this Sacrament, united to Chriſt. That which *repreſents his Body* is made part of ours; which is Sacramental, and ſignifies the Union of our Minds to him, and the being aſſimilated to him in Purity, Humility, Meekneſs, Self-denial, and all other Chriſtian Graces. We ſay, that two Men of the ſame Mind, Diſpoſition, Inclination, Intereſt, *&c.* are the ſame; and they muſt be not ſo much two, as one multiplied. Such a Union, ſuch an *Identity* ſhou'd be betwixt Chriſt and his Diſciple myſtically expreſs'd by this Sacrament, that there may be a communication of his Merits to us alſo. The ſecond Union that is repreſented by it, is that which is or ſhou'd be between Chriſtians, Members of the ſame Church, who have one Faith, Baptiſm, Father, Hope, and Heaven. The Bread is made up of many

many Grains, and the Wine of many Drops, and each yet but one Bread and one Cup; ſo the Chriſtians are call'd *one Bread*, 1 *Cor.* 10. 17. all one Spiritual and Political Body, and each being a Member, ſhou'd have the ſame care of the whole.

4. That 'tis an Emblem (conſequently) of that Charity, Friendſhip, and Familiarity that ſhou'd be betwixt thoſe of the ſame Profeſſion. Eating and Drinking together has been always (as it is ſtill) a ſign and effect of Covenants, Friendſhip, and Confederation; and there ſeems a natural reaſon for it. The ſame Food is converted into every one of their Bodies, and ſo there is as near an Alliance and Unity, as there can be between ſeveral *Individuals*. This Sacrament is accordingly a *Symbol* of Confederation, Peace, Charity, and Reconciliation betwixt the ſeveral Communicants. And this is the reaſon that the ſeveral breaches in Friendſhip are to be made up; Injuries accounted for and forgiven; and Reconciliation and Friendſhip made betwixt Chriſtians in their Preparation for this Feaſt of Love, that it may not repreſent us amiſs.

5. That it is (in the laſt place) a Sign, Means, Seal, and Pledge of our Pardon. When God ſees this, he remembers his Sons Sufferings; and 'tis the ſign of the New Covenant made betwixt God and us, as the *Rainbow* was of that made againſt a ſecond *Deluge*. 'Tis one of the Means Chriſt has ordain'd for the Conveyance of his Merits to us. His Seal left on Earth to enſure us of Pardon and Forgiveneſs, and a Pledge, that he will own, receive, and reward

us

us as his Members.——So *big of Myſtery*, and ſignificant is this Holy Ceremony contriv'd by Chriſt after the Pattern of the *Paſſover* to ſucceed it, and ſerve the ſame uſes!

Theſe are ſome of the Heads that he ſhon'd think of in the time, while the *Elements* are delivered to his Fellow-Communicants. Theſe he ſhou'd reduce into Spiritual Meditations and Exerciſes. Of which he may take this Example.

V. " *In this whole Action, as in a Mirror (my* " *God, my Creator) I ſee thine unparrallel'd Love* " *which thou didſt bear to thy Creature Man, even* " *then when he had renounc'd thee, defac'd thy* " *Image, and turn'd Rebel. Even then thou cou'dſt* " *not chuſe but love and pity him to that degree, as* " *to ſend thine only Son to recover him, firſt to* " *Pardon, and then to Innocency. But who can ex-* " *preſs, nay conceive, the greatneſs of thy Under-* " *taking O Generous, Charitable, and Benign Jeſus,* " *who offered'ſt thy ſelf to ſo mean and miſerable an* " *Imployment. An Imployment that had all the* " *poſſible degrees of Diſgrace and Contempt, as well* " *as Pain and Sufferings annex'd to it! A God to* " *become a Man, that he might be capable of Death;* " *and a Servant that he might be Contemn'd; and* " *a Malefactor that he might ſuffer the moſt Pain-* " *ful and Ignominious Death of the Croſs, introduc'd* " *with cruel Scourgings, and more cruel Mocking* " *from thoſe he came to Save! 'Tis this laſt and* " *more precious Scene of thy Life (thy Death I* " *mean) that I now Commemorate and ſee Repre-* " *ſented in this Sacrament, and cannot but thus re-* " *flect upon the ſeveral Paſſages of it. Methinks I* " *ſee thee in the Garden, in that inexpreſſible Agony*

" *of*

" of *Mind*, distracted betwixt *Love*, *Fear*, *Obedi-*
" *ence*, *Resolutions*, *Unwillingness*, and other our
" *Passions*; 'till a bloody Sweat forc'd it self thro'
" the *Pores* of thy *Body*. *I see thee betray'd by thy*
" *Steward*, deny'd and forsworn by thy *Valiant*
" *Champion* Peter, and forsaken by all; disgrac'd
" by the *Jews* and *Priests*, scorn'd by the *Soldiers*,
" crown'd with sharp wounding *Thorns*, and arm'd
" with a *Reed*, instead of a *Rod of Iron*; declar'd
" *Innocent*, and yet condemn'd to that curs'd *Death*
" of *Crucifixion*; thy *Flesh* first torn off with the
" *Whips*, and then the *Cross* laid upon thy *Shoul-*
" *ders*, to bear that which must presently bear thee!
" The tenderest parts of thy tender and *Virgin Body*,
" thy *Hands* and *Feet* pierc'd thro' with those *Nails*
" that must fix thee to thy *Cross*. Thy whole *Body*
" resting upon those *Wounds* till by a lingring, pain-
" ful *Death*, thy *Soul* must be tortur'd out of it.------
" But you, my curs'd and murdering *Crimes*, come
" hither and behold what the *Divine Justice* was
" forc'd (by you) to do to his own *Son*! You my
" *Riots* and *Intemperances*, and thou my wanton
" *Appetite*, hear him complaining for *Thirst*, and
" see how they satisfie him with *Vinegar* and *Gall*.
" And thou my restless *Pride*, that wilt not suffer
" me to take the least *Affront*; see here the *God of*
" *Nature* Buffeted, Spit upon, and scorn'd on the
" *Cross* where (one wou'd think) he might have pro-
" cur'd some pity. But O my *Impatiencies* and
" *Testy Passions*, see how he demeans himself under
" all these *Pressures* and *Provocations*, *Silence*, and
" *Submission*, *Meekness* and *Patience* answer'd all.
" And therefore, lastly, you my malicious and re-
" vengeful *Thoughts* and angry *Resolves*, see his
" *Victorious Patience* and returns of *Love*. And
" thou, O *Divine Charity*, help me to conquer these,

" and

" *and imitate his expiring Goodneſs, even to his Ene-*
" *mies and Murtherers. Father forgive them, for*
" *they know not what they do,* &c. *Thus (O my Sins)*
" *have ye ſerv'd my Saviour and my Surety, and*
" *thus wou'd ye ſerve me. And that Tragedy which*
" *was begun upon him, and ended in his Death,*
" *muſt by reaſon of you, have been mine and mine*
" *eternally. And thus do you ſtill endeavour, not-*
" *withſtanding his Sufferings, to ruine me, and feed*
" *me with Deceits to my Deſtruction.* ——
" *Begone then, you flattering Traytors, that* Judas-
" *like will betray me with a Kiſs. I have renew'd a-*
" *gain my Baptiſmal Vow of Renunciation of every*
" *one of you. None of the accurſed thing ſhall cleave*
" *to me, nor will I harbour the leaſt beloved Viper*
" *in my Boſom any more. Away from me, I will*
" *keep the Commandments of my God. But thou*
" *(O Crucified Saviour) who with expanded Arms*
" *inviteſt the weary and heavy Laden, whoſe Body*
" *was broken, and Blood poured out in thine Agony,*
" *ſpinal Coronation and Scourgings, in the piercing*
" *of thy Hands, and thy Feet, and thy Side (all*
" *which is exhibited to me in this Holy Action)*
" *grant me Pardon for all my Sins, and Grace to*
" *reſiſt them. Let thy Sufferings be reputed mine,*
" *and thy Righteouſneſs ſupply my Defects, and let*
" *thy Sacrament be the Sign, Seal, and Pledge of*
" *both.* Amen.

Thus let the *Devout Receiver* turn the Doctrine of this Sacrament into Practical *Soliloques*, and Spiritual Exerciſes of the Mind; of which all Books of Prayer, and of Preparations and Directions for Receiving this Sacrament are full, and he may have the heightened Thoughts of abundance of the beſt Chriſtians to aſſiſt him, both before, at, and after the Participation.

VI. What

VI. What remains therefore now, but that the Devout Communicant ſhould end this Service with Prayers and Praiſes, that he ſhou'd offer his Soul and Body a reaſonable Holy and Lively Sacrifice to Him who was Sacrific'd Himſelf, and made this Sacrament a Commemorative Sacrifice for us. That he ſhould earneſtly beg the Graces of Perſeverance and Continuance, and both theſe in thoſe Pious and proper Forms the Church has compos'd for him. And finally, That he ſhould welcome our Lord into his Heart, in the ſame words the Holy Angels did Him into the World, *Gloria Deo in excelſis, Glory be to God on high, on Earth Peace, Good Will towards Men*; and having finiſhed the Service, and received the Bleſſing, let him return home Merry, Joyful, and at Peace.

Thus I have ſpoken of that which I judg'd neceſſary, as to the two things conſiderable in this Head, *Preparation* and *Participation*. And before I conclude, think fit to add one Chapter about a third thing, the Neceſſity of this great Duty, and the rather, becauſe thoſe that have writ on this Subject, do not, in my Mind, preſs home the ſame with that Warmth, Application, and Earneſtneſs it deſerveth.

CHAP.

CHAP. XV.

Of the great Neceſſity of this Sacrament.

I. THere is now therefore nothing remaining to be ſpoke to, but the great Neceſſity of this Duty, ſo generally neglected, that but a few (if you compute numbers of all thoſe that call themſelves Chriſtians) ſeriouſly concern themſelves about it. And there be very many that live all their Days within the Pale of the Church, and own the Chriſtian Religion, that yet die without this Sacrament; and many more that never think it neceſſary to Salvation. 'Tis look'd upon by Multitudes, as a troubleſome Duty, becauſe it requires ſuch Preparation and Addreſs, and they hope to go to Heaven without it. Beſides, 'tis thought dangerous; *He that Eats and Drinks unworthily, Eats and Drinks his own Damnation*; and who is worthy for this thing, and when can a Man know that he is ſo? And therefore of two Evils, they think it Prudence to chooſe the leaſt, truſt to God's Mercy, and not run the Hazard. And indeed, 'tis very obſervable, that the Devil is averſe to no Duty as much as this. He will ſometimes ſuffer his ſworn Servants to come to Church, hear *Prayers* and *Sermons*; and even *Witches* are ſaid (ſometimes) to be diſpens'd with ſo far as to pretend a kind of Religion in other things; but he is infinitely zealous a-

againſt this, and will ſuffer none of his to be partakers of it. A great Argument to me of its contrariety to his Kingdom. And indeed he uſes many Methods to divert Men, if poſſible, from it. He pretends firſt there's no neceſſity of the thing. Then he makes the Myſtery ſo great that paſſes moſt Mens Underſtandings; and who will meddle with that he cannot comprehend? At other times he raiſes ſo many ſcruples about the fit Preparations to it, or Participation of it, that no Man can think himſelf worthy. And then he repreſents the danger of Unworthy Receiving ſo dreadful, that the Man may think himſelf irrecoverably loſt, if he chance to entertain a wandering thought in it, or falls into any Temptation after it. And if none of theſe will do (as they ſeldom miſs) then he hurries them on without due Preparation to make it a cuſtomary and careleſs Duty, and ſo not to diſcern the Lord's Body from common Food. " *Cunning and Curſed Enemy of our Souls, how many and how various are* " *thy Methods to deprive us of our Crucified Saviour.*

2. In order therefore to prevent theſe his deſigns and to ſtir up Men in this cold and unconcern'd Age to an enquiry (at leaſt) into this matter, I ſhall lay before them the Reaſons whence this neceſſity ariſes, and then conſider the Objections, or rather Excuſes, that they make to themſelves either to defer it, or lay it aſide for good and all.

The Church tells us that the *two Sacraments are generally neceſſary to Salvation.* That is neceſſary for all Men, that are not hindred by ſome invincible *impediment, and according to the ordinary means* the Goſpel propoſes to that purpoſe. And that this Sacrament is thus neceſſary, will appear from theſe grounds.

The

The first is that of our Lord's Command at his Institution, when we read that he commanded his Disciples to do as he had done, *Do this* * *in or for a remembrance of me*, Luke 22. 19. And (one wou'd think) this is plain and obvious, and admits of no Evasion. The The Command is peremptory and as obligatory as if it had been never so often repeated; but a repetition cou'd not be well expected when he had but so very little time to live: Death was in prospect, which gave a shock to his Human Nature. *Judas* was at hand to betray him, and the *Jews* to seize him. The bitter Cup was fill'd and at his Lips; nor must he now ever more in this World *drink of the pleasing Fruit of the Vine.* He was now to address himself to his Passion; a work that might well take up all his Thoughts, and therefore he express'd his earnest desire to eat with them this his last Passover, that he might have an opportunity of instituting this memorial and Feast of his Love before he suffered. And this may suffice to answer those that wou'd expect great exactness, and a repeated Command at the first Institution; tho' 'tis very probable this was done more at large, and the Circumstances adjusted as to Time, Place, and Order, after his Resurrection; when for forty days he instructed them in the matters concerning his Kingdom—— But one Command from him is equivalent to a thousand, and this one Command proceeds to acquire more Authority and Obligation from the Circumstances of the *Institutor* and the easiness of the *Thing*. The Author of it was our dear Lord, and he in the very Evening of his Death, just rea-

* Or as the *Syriack* hath it, *Do thus.*

dy to be delivered up to ſuffer the diſpleaſure of God his Father, and the malicious efforts of the *Jews*, and that for us. And what was it that he deſires of us at that time? Only that we ſhou'd Commemorate his Death by this Service. The laſt deſires of our dying Friends, makes uſually the greateſt impreſſion on us, eſpecially if it be an eaſie requeſt, and a Work of Piety and Charity; and this has all theſe qualifications. Ungrateful, Unthankful Man, that wilt not oblige thy Redeemer in ſo ſmall a requeſt? What did he ſuffer for thee, and thou think much to Commemorate theſe his Sufferings by ſuch eaſie Ceremonies, as eating and drinking in a Religious way? Was his Body broken for thee, and wilt thou not break Bread for him? And did he take to himſelf the bitter Cup of God's Wrath prepar'd for thee, and drink it up dregs and all, and doſt thou think much to Commemorate this his kindneſs in a Cup of *Euchariſtic Wine?* This is ſuch a monſtrous piece of Ingratitude and Diſobedience together, that I am aſham'd to expoſe it further; and methinks the Delinquent ſhou'd be aſham'd of it alſo.

III. The ſecond ground of neceſſity ariſeth from the *Apoſtolic Practice*, and without doubt our Saviour gave them particular Directions in this as well as other Concerns of his Kingdom during the forty days appearance, and converſes with them; or elſe they were guided by the extraordinary impulſes of the Holy Ghoſt in this affair. For immediately after the deſcending of the HolySpirit on them at the day of *Pentecoſt*, they Preached boldly, Converted Multitudes, Aſſembled daily in the *Temple* (the Houſe of Prayer) and

and in the * Houſe or *Upper Room, there breaking of Bread*, Acts 2. 46. The breaking of Bread all agree to be the receiving of this Sacrament, and this ſeems by this place to be the work of every day in their ordinary courſe of Prayers, and that the Worſhip of God was not uſually perform'd without it: But they miſſed it not at leaſt on the *Lord's-day*. They came together in ſettled Churches for that purpoſe, and it ſeem'd to be the great Work of the day, and the Divine Service imperfect without it, *Acts* 20. 7. Thus it continued during the Primitive Times and firſt Ages; and then cooled by degrees with the other parts of Religion. From every Lord's-day it came to once a Month, thence it fell to once a Quarter, and at laſt ſometimes to once in a Year; till the Church took notice of the Scandalous neglect, and fixt it at three times a Year at the loweſt to the *Laity*, and oftner in *Cathedrals*, *Colleges*, and other places of learned Education. And beſides, the ancient commonneſs began to produce a diſeſteem, and therefore the Church was forc'd (to her great trouble) to conſent to an abatement of its uſe, to preſerve its due Sacredneſs. But whatſoever were the cauſes of the preſent more rare uſe of it in our Pariſh-Churches, yet it is certain thoſe that were preſent at the firſt Inſtitution of it, and knew our Savour's Mind beſt, us'd it at *Jeruſalem* every day, and (at other ſettled Churches) every Lord's-day, if not oftner. For it ſeems (as I obſerv'd before) to be a part of the Publick Worſhip of God, and the Prayers ſeldom made without it. And even at this day it keeps its place in the ſecond Service, and there

* *Vid. Dr.* Hammond *Annotat. in Act.* 1. 13.

is a kind of breach in the Order of Prayers when it is omitted. In the *Weſtern Church* it continued every day for ſeveral *Centuries*, and in the *Eaſtern* on *Wedneſdays*, *Fridays* and *Saturdays*, beſides the *Lord's-days*, and thoſe dedicated to the *Memories of the Martyrs*. Since it has decayed in both, and with us is now reduc'd moſt commonly to the three greater Feſtivals, *Chriſtmaſs*, *Eaſter*, and *Whitſuntide*. But whenſoever it was Adminiſtred in thoſe days, 'twas a great Crime, and unuſual, to neglect it; and the *Ancient Canons* aſcrib'd to the *Apoſtles* and thoſe of the *Council* of *Antioch*, denounc'd *Excommunication* againſt thoſe that ſtaid not in the Church to Communicate. The conſequence then is this, If there be any power in Examples, and thoſe of the Beſt, Pureſt, and Apoſtolic times; if there be any Obligation from the Commands of the Ancient or Preſent Church of Chriſt, or the uſages of all Churches, or thoſe of our own (and he muſt needs be an *Infidel* that has caſt off the Authority of all theſe) we muſt then and ought to Celebrate this Sacrament as often as we can obtain it. We muſt not, nor ought we to depart out of the Church, turn our Backs on the *Symbols* of our deliverance, and leave our Brethren, till with them we Commemorated our common Saviour.

IV. 3. The third Reaſon reſults out of the Nature of the thing it ſelf. It is not only a Sign, but a Seal, Pledge and Aſſurance of Chriſt's Death, and of the Benefits we receive thereby. And he that duly prepares himſelf, and approaches God's Table with Reverence, Innocency and Thankfulneſs, may aſſure himſelf (by theſe tokens) of Remiſſion of Sins, Reconciliation and

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a State of Grace, (and if he dies before more actual Sins) of a State of Glory. God has set his Seal to his Pardon, and all the Sufferings of Christ are made his. And as sure as he eats this Bread and drinks this Cup (which by this means is incorporated with him) so surely will and doth God by this Sacrament distribute to him an Act of Indemnity and Oblivion for all his sins past. And who wou'd deny God's Seal when he tenders it, or refuse the Pledges of his Salvation, when they are reached out to him! Nay more, it is one of the means (not *Physical*, but *Sacramental*) by which we receive the benefits of Christ's Death, and consequently Eternal Life, and shall any Man expect the End without the Means? We may as well hope to continue here without Meat or Drink, or live without Breathing. Christ has tied the End to the Means, and we must not pretend to the one without the other. *Except ye eat the Flesh of the Son of Man and drink his Blood, you have no* [Spiritual] *life in you. And whoso eateth my Flesh and drinketh my Blood, hath Eternal Life, and I will raise him up at the last day*, &c. These are our Lord's Expressions to the *Jews*, *John* 6. 53, 54. I know very well that most Expositors understand these words of Receiving, Believing and Practising his Doctrines, because this Sacrament was not then Instituted, and I believe he might refer to these Acts; tho' by a usual *Prolepsis* he might have an Eye also to this necessary Sacramental eating of his Body and Blood, which is a necessary consequent of Faith and Practice. I am sure 'tis true of this as well as of the other, and he that refuses this, can have no Spiritual Life in him.

V. From whence it follows that the neglect of this Sacrament is a manifest undervaluing of the

Death of Chriſt, and a ſlighting of his Merits. A ſetting at nought the purifying and reconciling Blood of the Lamb of God, and abuſing the everlaſting Covenant and the Conditions thereof. When a Man will not give himſelf ſo much time and leiſure from his ſins or his Worldly buſineſs, as to Commemorate the Death of his dear Lord, or part with his Luſts and unlawful Enjoyments to fit himſelf for it. What can we conclude but that he cares not for it. That with *Eſau* he prefers a Meſs of Broth before his Inheritance; and a ſhort Enjoyment before a Heavenly Birth-Right. He that will not take care that the aſſurances of his Eſtate be Seal'd and receiv'd into his Poſſeſſion, ſurely cares not for it.

Nay more than this, 'tis not only a private and implicit, but an open Separation from the Chriſtian Communion; and an effectual Renunciation of that Religion that Chriſt brought into the World. So it had been judg'd in former times, and the Man look'd upon as a Revolter from Chriſtianity, and as one that had denied the Faith. And tho' the commonneſs of this ſin, has leſſened the Crime in Mens Jugments (and 'tis pitty it ſhou'd be ſo) yet if we duly conſider what it is to refuſe this Sacred Ordinance, we ſhall find it to amount to no leſs than a vertual Renunciation of our Baptiſm, of Chriſtian Religion, yea, and of all Religion and implicit Atheiſm. It is as much as to ſay one of theſe two things.

Firſt, That he wants not the Merits and Advantages which are conveyed to him in this Sacrament, and ſo deſpiſes both, and him that it repreſents. Or,

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Secondly, That he believes not the thing repreſented by it, and the Doctrines depending thereupon. The firſt of which is plain *Blaſphemy*, and the ſecond down-right *Atheiſm*. No! You'd ſay, there may be a better conſtruction put upon the preſent refuſal; which is this. This Sacrament will oblige me to Repentance, and to ſincere Reſolutions of Reformation; and in conſequence of this, I muſt leave my beloved Vices, and thoſe Sins to which by Nature and Cuſtom I am addicted. But this I cannot and will not yet reſolve to do, and therefore will come under no Engagement to that purpoſe; leſt I add to my other Sinsboth *Perjury* and *Hypocriſie*. And as plauſible as this excuſe looks, 'tis no leſs than Impenitency reſolv'd upon, and conſequently Eternal Damnation.

VI. You ſee then (O ye unhappy Nominal Chriſtians only) that ſeem to own that Profeſſion, and yet deny one of the moſt eſſential Ordinances of the ſame) you ſee (I ſay) what muſt be the meaning of your refuſal, not only a preſent defection from the Unity of the Church, and an Excommunicating your ſelves from the Communion thereof; but a manifeſt undervaluing of Chriſt, his Death and Merits. At beſt but reſolv'd Impenitency, which if perſiſted in, will as infallibly damn you, as either of the other two, *viz. Blaſphemy* or *Atheiſm*. You ſee the conſequences of your own Practiſe. And therefore ſure your Arguments that keep you back, muſt be very ſtrong, and your Prejudices inſuperable. And what are theſe? Is it any conſiderable defect in your Underſtanding that may render you unfit for ſuch a

reaſonable Service? That's indeed a tolerable excuſe, and perhaps the only juſtifiable excuſe for a total forbearance. God doth not require it of Fools and Mad-men. Theſe only have a diſpenſation from this and every other Service, and are reſerv'd to the unreveal'd Methods of his Mercy. But this is not your Caſe. God has given you a ſufficient meaſure of Reaſon and Underſtanding, and you profeſs to believe the *Holy Writings* containing *Reveal'd Religion* and *Chriſt Crucified*. You own him and his Doctrines, and wou'd be very angry with him that ſhou'd queſtion your Chriſtianity. You have been Baptized into his Name and Faith, and have (whether you know it or no) taken upon you the Vow of Renunciation, Faith, and Obedience, and *the Glorious Enſign of the Croſs*. You farther aſſociate with the reſt of Chriſtians, and ſometimes at leaſt, Aſſemble with them in Religious Duties, in Prayers and hearing the Word. What makes you then go out of the Church when this part of the Divine Service is to be Celebrated, and turn your backs upon the Symbols of your Salvation? It is not Sickneſs, Lameneſs, old Age, or any other Bodily Infirmity; Theſe wou'd indeed keep you from Church ſometimes, but wou'd never carry you out thence before this part of the Divine Service. Theſe will ſometimes excuſe the whole Publick Worſhip, and keep the indiſpoſed Perſon at home (in which caſe the Private Prayers muſt ſupply the Publick defect) but will ſeldom force him from the Communion of the Faithful in the *Lord's Supper*. But what ſhou'd hinder you that labour under no ſuch Impediment, and can at times frequent the other parts of God's Worſhip, and yet cannot be perſuaded to take part of this

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for whole years, and ſometimes not once in your whole life time? Are they not ſuch as theſe?

1. You are perſuaded 'tis a dangerous thing to participate. Not to your Bodies be ſure, but to your Souls. As tho' Chriſt (that came to Redeem us, and to that purpoſe did inſtitute this Ceremony) ſhou'd ſo far miſtake himſelf as to ordain that which ſhou'd tend to our *Damnation*. But wherein doth the danger conſiſt? If in the undue Preparation, 'tis our own fault, and ought to be amended for the future; and I have ſhewed before there's nothing requir'd of us in order to receive this Sacrament which is unpoſſible or unreaſonable; nay, what is not neceſſary at all times. But here lies the Myſtery of Iniquity; the Devil to keep Men from it, hath made the *Notion* of it ſo unintelligible, the Preparation ſo ſevere, and the Participation ſo abſtracted and free from Human Imperfections, that Men are afraid to meddle with it. In oppoſition therefore to theſe dangerous Notions, I muſt aſſert, that there is nothing inconceivable, or impracticable in the whole thing. Nor is any Man to be excluded, but the Impenitent and Preſuptuous Sinner, the Prophane, the Carnal, Voluptuous, the Cheat, and the Hypocrite. Let ſuch ſtand off at their Peril, till they are reform'd, and no longer. But as for all honeſt hearted Penitents, that do not diſſemble with God and their own Conſciences, but ſincerely intend to live better; that are in *Charity with all Men*, and do forgive, as they intend to be forgiven; *Let ſuch (I ſay) draw near with Faith, and take this Holy Sacrament to their Comfort.*

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But as the Devil pleaded Scripture to our Lord, in his Temptation in the Wilderneſs, ſo he doth in this caſe, to encreaſe the Danger, and ſo deterr Men from that way; and that in the words of St. *Paul*, 1 *Cor.* 11. 27, 29. *He that Eateth and Drinketh unworthily, Eateth and Drinketh Damnation to himſelf, not diſcerning the Lord's Body.* Whence he inferrs, that the unworthy Receiver muſt be Damn'd, and who can be worthy or ſufficient for this thing. 'Tis ſome of his *Sophiſtry* to draw falſe Concluſions from true Principles, which we may eaſily be convinc'd of, if we conſider theſe two things. 1. What was the condemning Sin of the *Corinthians*. 'Twas a notorious abuſe of the Lord's-Supper, in their licentious and irregular *Love-Feaſts*, which were annex'd to it, in which ſome were Drunken and Gluttons, and others Hungry. The Rich Feaſting Liberally, and the Poor Hungry deſpis'd and aſham'd. Now, tho' theſe (Αγάπαι) *Love Feaſts* then in uſe, are now long ſince wholly laid aſide in the Church; yet by a Parity of reaſon we may conclude from this Inſtance, that whoſoever comes preſumptuouſly and profanely to the Lord's Table, and there receives, without any Reverence or Devotion, that Eats and Drinks inordinately and irregularly, as he doth at a common Feaſt, not diſcerning the Lord's-Body, or diſtinguiſhing of it from ordinary Food (which yet is to be received with Thanksgiving) I ſay he that doth thus (as the *Corinthians* are ſaid to do) is guilty of the Sin, and conſequently liable to the puniſhment of the Text, which is next to be conſidered. 2. Therefore the *Word* we tranſlate *Damnation*, is in the Original Κρίμα, which ſignifies (as it

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is noted in the *Margin* of this place) Judgment. And in other places 'tis ſometimes underſtood of Temporal, and ſometimes of Eternal Judgments. And in this place it may well be underſtood of both, but of Temporal Judgments primarily and originally, which the words following doth evince, *v.* 30. for this cauſe (viz. *of Eating and Drinking unworthily*, &c. and as the manifeſtation of the Puniſhment) *many are weak and ſickly amongſt you, and many Sleep.* Theſe Temporal Puniſhments of Sickneſs and Death are Chaſtiſements of God and Judgments for your unworthy and irreverent approaches to God's Table; and if you repent not, you muſt juſtly expect eternal Judgments in the World to come. And the full ſence of the words are theſe. He that profanes the Lord's-Supper by want of due Preparation, or irreverend and unchriſtian Behaviour there, not diſcerning its Holy uſe from common Meats, is ſo far from benefiting himſelf thereby, that he Eats and Drinks Judgments to himſelf, Sentences and Condemns himſelf by that very Fact to the Judgments of God here and hereafter. Now, let any Man judge whether this be any diſcouragement to come to the Lord's-Table; or rather not an admonition to Reverence and Godly Fear; or whether any are in danger but the *reſolutely Profane*, that wilfully abuſe this Holy Feaſt with Riot and Contempt. Such were ſome of theſe *Corinthians*; and tho' the Times be wicked enough; yet, I hope, there be few or none of theſe bold and preſumptuous Profaners of this *Serious Ordinance* amongſt us. And if there be, the Puniſhment in the greateſt Latitude of the Word, is little enough for them. If any Man

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be not ſatisfied with this ſhort account, let him read Dr. *Tillotſon*, or Dr. *Calamy's Sermon*, on theſe words purpoſely Publiſhed to anſwer this Objection, and they will find full ſatisfaction.

I cannot remember any other Excuſes worthy of our Conſideration, but that of *the not being in Charity*, as the common People expreſs it; that is, of harbouring Envy and Malice in our Hearts, againſt ſome that have Injur'd us, or with whom we have a Suit at Law. As to the firſt, Another hath Injur'd me, and therefore I will Injure my ſelf; another hath done me ſome ſmall prejudice in Body or Eſtate; and therefore I will neglect my eternal welfare. What a Perverſe, what a Mad deſtructive Reſolution is this? Why ſhou'd I injure my ſelf thus upon anothers Injury? The truth is, there can be no pretence or colour in this Excuſe. Haſt thou done an Injury, 'tis but time for thee to repent and make ſatisfaction. Haſt thou receiv'd any, if it be ſmall and tolerable, be ſo generous as to paſs it by. It is more glorious and great to forgive freely, than to be ſatisfied, and agreeable to our Lord's Precepts of Perfection in the Mount, *Matth.* 5. 39, *&c.* But if the Injury be of that Nature, that thou canſt not in prudence paſs it by in Silence, then refer it to the Judge. *The Magiſtrate bears not the Sword in vain.* He is the Miniſter of God and his Vicegerent; *A Revenger to execute Wrath on him that doth Evil.* Leave, I ſay, to him both the Injury and the Puniſhment of it, and trouble not thy ſelf with either. He will take care for thy Satisfaction and his Puniſhment, and will execute Vengeance according to Law and Equity. Why ſhouldſt thou

thou try to take the Sword out of his Hand in vain, and contrive Methods of Retaliation on him to no purpoſe; This thou can'ſt not lawfully, thou muſt not, nay thou needſt not do. Seeing the Magiſtrate will do it for thee; and ſo eaſe thee of the Crime, and the care of Revenge. All that thou art to do, is to uſe all manner of ſoft ways to bring him to his ſelf, to make him ſee his Fault, and confeſs it, and if thou canſt not undeceive him into his Duty, do not harden him, but let him alone, and mind thine own. In the mean time, let Charity always rule in thine Heart, and wait for an opportunity of Reconciliation. Thus for Injuries receiv'd, and then for Suits of Law (I ſay) that this is alſo a frivolous, nay! a *Diabolical Pretence*; and as dangerous as any one the *Devil* yet Invented to deceive poor Mankind withal. For going to Law is only the referring of a Controverted Title, or a doubtful Caſe, to the grave and diſintereſted Judgment of the *Judge* and *Jury*; the one for Law, the other for the Fact according to the *ancient* and *laudable Cuſtoms* of the place we live in. And ſtript of all its ſinful Appendages, it's nothing elſe but a putting of our caſe to reference. And this is not only lawful for a Chriſtian, but ſometimes laudable and neceſſary, if it can be done without the breach of Charity; otherwiſe 'tis neither. The Law is Righteous and Holy; 'tis the abuſe of it that makes it ſinful, and that only in him that abuſes it. Malice and Revenge ought to have no place here. Let each Party defend his right as far as lawfully and prudently he may, and leave the iſſue to *God* and his *Countrymen*; and if theſe laſt will not do him

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Juſtice, the former will. However, he that cannot Eat and Drink with his Adverſary, and do him all honeſt Offices; he that maligns and uſes any indirect means to bear him down; he that hates him, and endeavours to ſmite him in ſecret, had better loſe all his Eſtate, real and perſonal than go to Law; becauſe thereby he gratifies corrupt Nature, and the Devil, loſes his Charity, and puts himſelf into the ſtate of Damnation. Do thou therefore either not go to Law at all, or elſe ſo go, that thou may'ſt alſo go to the Lord's Table in the company of Charity.

And then, in the laſt place, I am aſham'd to conſider the *Procraſtinator's Plea*, that puts off this Duty, and referrs it to a further Time; which is the height of Folly and Madneſs. For wilt thou deal thus with thy Temporal Eſtate, and deferr the enſuring of it to thy ſelf and thy Heirs from Day to Day, Year to Year, yea, and all thy Life time? No, not an Hour thou wilt not give Sleep to thy Eyes, till the Aſſurances are ſeal'd; Why? becauſe it is an apparent hazard in thy great Concern. And why ſhould *the Children of this World be more Wiſe in their Generation than the Children of Light?* Or why ſhou'd not Remiſſion of Sins be as ſedulouſly ſought after, as any Pardon for Life and Eſtate; or our Heavenly Eſtate be as zealouſly ſecur'd as our Earthly; and why not, in truth much more? Thou wilt do it, but not now; but why not now, before another time? Is the time to come in thine own Power, or can'ſt thou be ſure of another opportunity? Can'ſt thou be ſure of thy ſelf and thine own Will, and of that Grace that thou ſlighteſt at preſent? No, of none of theſe, nor of many other Accidents.

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Delay not therefore, nor deferr doing that which muſt be once done, and that throughly too, or thou art loſt, and that to all Eternity. Thy Sins muſt be left at laſt, and 'tis better parting with them *before they have taken ſuch hold on thee, that thou art not able to look up.* Thy Peace muſt be made with God, and thou thy ſelf reconcil'd to him, or thou art miſerable. Begin therefore betimes, before Death, old Age, or hardneſs of Heart ſeize upon thee. The opportunity may be loſt, and the Door ſhut; and then thou art undone for ever. Thus much to this fooliſh pretence; nor ſhall I take notice of any more Objections, Scruples, or Excuſes; but referr the Reader to thoſe many Divines who have writ purpoſely and plentifully on this Subject, while I return, and tye a Knot upon the neceſſity of this Ordinance.

VII. In brief therefore, if we conſider the *Author* of this part of Divine Worſhip, 'tis our *Redeemer.* He that left the Joys of Heaven to viſit poor undone Mankind, in great Humility, and in the form of a Servant. He deſcended to be poor, deſpiſed, betrayed, falſly accus'd, and to ſuſtain the Character of a *Malefactor* for our Salvation. Behold here aſtoniſhing and unparallel'd Love; a Love that was ſtronger than Death it ſelf! So that there is all the Obligations in the World from the firſt Inſtitutor of it. If we conſider the thing it ſelf, It is not to ſhed our deareſt Blood for Him, who willingly did ſhed His for us; or that of our Sons or Daughters, *the Fruit of our Bodies for the Sin of our Souls.* Theſe cruel Sacrifices were requir'd only by the *Bloody Dæmons* of the Hea-

Heathen Votaries. 'Tis not to part with our Flocks or Herds, our Bullocks or Lambs, as it was under the *Jewiſh Oeconomy*; our Eſtates Real or Perſonal. No, we may keep that for our ſelves and our Friends. It is not to take long *Pilgrimages* or perilous Journeys for his ſake, to leave our Country and Kindred and go into a Land unknown, forſaking all that we have. Tho' all this muſt be too little for him that hath done ſo much for us, yet 'tis none of theſe, or of the like unwelcome Nature. 'Tis only this, that at fit and ſeaſonable Times we ſhou'd meet our Fellow Chriſtians at a Feaſt of Innocency, Holineſs and Love; and there by Eating and Drinking in a Religious manner, by ſignificant Signs and Ceremonies, repreſent to God, Man, and our ſelves his Death for us; the greateſt Inſtance of Love that ever the World had. 'Tis only to Sign and Seal the *Counter Part* of thy *Pardon*, and renew our aſſurance for Heaven and its Joys. He that refuſes this is an equal *Prodigy* of Folly and Cruelty to his dear ſelf, his Body and Soul; and of *Ingratitude* to his *Redeemer*. And thus I have done with what I thought fit to offer on this Argument, and with this Book, after I have cloſed up all in a ſhort Review, and Concluſion.

The Close.

AND now *Christian Readers*, whose Candor and Patience hath accompanied me hitherto, I desire you in the Close of all, to reflect upon these three things. 1. The ancient and present State of the Worship of God, thro' the whole World. 2. The Defection of those amongst whom we live, and their Atheistical Coldness and Unconcernedness in this great Duty. And 3*ly*. My present Design and Undertaking on the whole Matter.

I. For the first. 'Tis the natural and acknowledg'd consequence of the Notion of a God, that he ought to be Acknowledg'd, Confess'd, Worship'd, and Ador'd. And accordingly, as we find few or no Nations so Barbarous and Unthinking, that they own not God; so there are few or none that do not Worship Him. Hence it was, that all the Heathens of old had their *Temples*, *Places*, *Times*, and *Modes* of Divine Worship; and those sometimes so Chargeable and Expensive, that their best things were imploy'd in his Service, and their deerest in his Sacrifices. *Reveal'd Religion* taught a more reasonable and excellent way of performing this natural Duty, more worthy of God, and agreeable to the rational Nature. Both *Jewish* and *Christian* admitted external Modes of Worship, but the lat-

ter had no occaſion for thoſe Ties, Ceremonies, and Sacrifices that were done away, and therefore laid them all aſide, and directed the Devout Adorer to that of the Mind and the Spirit. *God is a Spirit, and he muſt be Worſhip'd in Spirit and in Truth.*

If we look back into the firſt Times of Chriſtianity, thoſe ancient and better Ages now long paſt, in which the Spirit of *Jeſus* acted vigorouſly in his Diſciples and Followers; you will find their Zeal exerciſing it ſelf in nothing more than in this Duty. They were Religious and conſtant Attendants on the Publick Aſſemblies for God's Worſhip, where theſe were ſuffer'd. And where they were prohibited upon the higheſt Penalties, yet they ventur'd to celebrate them at *Midnight* in *Woods*, unfrequented Places, and the *Tombs* of their *Martyrs*. And he that forſook theſe Religious Meetings, or neglected them in the times of Peace, was look'd upon as one that actually left the Faith, and relapſed to *Paganiſm*. Their Fear, Reverence, and Spiritual Awe of Mind, was great at thoſe times, and they came to theſe Meetings as into the preſence of the great and glorious God, and of the Holy Angels his *Attendants*. They had a Notion of the *Shechinah*, of the Divine Preſence, more glorioufly, as well as moſt graciouſly amongſt them at their Aſſemblies; (as well as the *Jews* had of theirs) that Chriſt their Saviour was there in a more peculiar manner, according to his Promiſe; and that the Holy Angels were likewiſe there Inviſibly to wait upon their Maker, and join in our Hymns of Praiſes. They prepar'd themſelves therefore with outward and inward Sanctifications; came thi-

thither chaſte in Body and Mind, and ſtaid there with Thoughts of the greateſt Concern and Devotion. They prayed with Hearts and Hands lifted up, Minds fixed on God, and their Souls were even ready to ſally out of their Bodies, to attend their Redeemer in abſtracted Adorations. Their Bodies attended their Minds, and both ſhewed the utmoſt outward Signs of Proſtration and Submiſſion. They heard God's Word Read and Expounded with the greateſt Reſpect and Attention; and departed to their own Houſes full of what they heard. They exhibited the Death of their Saviour every Day, or at leaſt every Lord's-Day; and the Worſhip was thought imperfect and maim'd without it. So fearful were they leſt his Death ſhould be forgotten, tho' but few Years paſt, and yet freſh in their remembrance, that they Commemorated it daily in the Lord's-Supper, and deſign'd it ſhould be continually annunciated till his coming again. In a word, they came to theſe Aſſemblies, empty of ſin and ſinful deſires, and return'd nouriſh'd and refreſh'd with Grace, and full of the *Divine Preſence*.

II. Thus it was in the ancient and beſt Churches and Times of Primitive Chriſtianity. But if thence we look down to theſe preſent Times, how unlike, yea, how contrary will they appear to the other. We have ſtill the *Lord's-Day*, other times of Devotion, and we have places for that purpoſe, ſome Great and Auguſt, Coſtly and Magnificent; others mean and ſmall, all decent, and the remains of the Piety of our Forefathers. They built them out of their Zeal and Love of God, and we are forc'd by Laws

to ſupport them. The Doors are opened once a Week at leaſt, and *Miniſters* appointed to attend the Divine Service in them. But alas, they that ſhou'd receive the benefit of their Conveniency, either refuſe or neglect it. The ordinary ſort of Chriſtians think it ſufficient to viſit theſe places once in a Seaſon, and come when they have little elſe to do. They look upon it as a think of decency only; and that they may, or may not, come thither without offence to God or Man. The Laws for coming to Church have been ſlackned in favour to the *Scrupulous Diſſenters*, and the Carnal *Abſenters* have taken the advantage, and plead Liberty of Conſcience to ſtay at home, and not ſerve God at all. They are not apprehenſive of any Obligations of Duty and Ties of Conſcience to the Service of God, and ſo make the *Lord's-Day* a Day of Reſt, but not of Religion. And ſo far hath blindneſs darkned their Minds, that they think it a great Obligation to the *Miniſter* if they come and hear him; and if any offence be taken, they totally forſake that, and ſometimes all other places of Divine Worſhip. I have known ſome, that upon the Death of a Friend have forſworn the Church, and have too Religiouſly obſerv'd their Oath; as tho' they won'd reak their Malice upon God, for taking of him away, and Worſhip him no more. Beſides, there be multitudes of *Neuters in Religion*, and are ſo indifferent as neither to ſtand for the Church eſtabliſhed, nor for the private Meetings. As for the better ſort, in reſpect of Eſtate, and Knowledge, our *Gentry* and *Nobility*, tho' theſe move in a higher and quicker Sphere, and are not ſubject to the ſtupidity and cold-

coldneſs of the Vulgar; yet Buſineſs and Pleaſure have too much influence over theſe, and few of them will make either of theſe give place to the work of Religion. When *God* and *Mammon* are at ſtrife for Precedency, the latter generally prevails; and even our Pleaſures are able to ſupercede our Prayers.

In a word, there ſeems to be a general deadneſs and unconcernedneſs as to this great Duty, and Men are not Zealous for it, but indifferent whether they do it or no.—— And yet if we look out into the preſent State of the Heathen World, we ſhall find the *Indians* and *Mahometans* more Zealous of their Idolatry. If into the Chriſtian, the *Papiſts* are ſtrict to their *Maſs*, and the *Diſſenters* of all ſorts, to their *Meetings*—— But to proceed: Then for thoſe that frequent the Worſhip of God, and thoſe that come accidently; how are we ſunk into diſreſpect and negligence? How are we fallen from the former Devotion! How bold and preſumptuous are ſome, and how dead and Earthly minded are others! Men come, but leave their Hearts (their Memories, Underſtandings and Affections) at home; or if they have them there, they employ them on thoughts foreign to Piety, except ſome extraordinary Sentence or Paſſion call them into activity. Our *Devotions* are aſleep at the *Prayers* generally, and our *Attention* at the *Sermon*. We are not mov'd at the *Old Forms*, be they never ſo Holy; nor at the *Old Doctrines*, be they never ſo *Orthodox*. New things only are able to awake us, and Curioſity to open our Ears into Attention. In ſhort, moſt that come ('tis feared) come not for the right Ends to worſhip God and to be inſtructed

ed, but for others; and so they return worse Christians than they came. Thus are we fallen into the dregs of Time, into an Age of *lukewarmness*, and *indifferency*, into hardness of Heart and Impiety. The Absent cannot, and those that are Present will not understand the Error of their way.

3. In this present lapsed condition of those amongst whom we live, I consider'd that perhaps writing might work upon these Men more than Preaching, which they will not hear at all, or hear to little purpose. This may be read at home, whereas they must go to Church (a place they care not for) to hear a *Sermon*; that often, as always in their sight, this once in their Ears, and thence vanishing into Air and Forgetfulness. A *Discourse* spoken, is like a *flash of Lightning*, but *printed* and *read*, may prove a continued *Light*. A *Book* lies open before Men, when *Sermons* (if attended) are yet forgotten. In this Discourse I have discover'd the true Nature and End of our Religious Assemblies, and the use of those places we call *Churches*. For I fear most Men have liv'd so long Christians, that they do not know what they do there, but take it to be a thing of Custom and formality alone: I have endeavoured to shew that 'tis the acknowledgment of our God, and of his Greatness and Goodness. That Gratitude, Justice, and Truth exacts it of us; and that it is accordingly a Branch of the Law of Nature. That 'tis the natural consequent of the Notion of a God, and the Universal practice of all Nations. That the *Christian Religion* above others, expects our *Publick Thankfulness*, and as it hath discover'd more of God's Goodness

Goodneſs to us; ſo it expects *Recognitions* and *Euchariſts* accordingly. And this being conſidered, the great neceſſity of our Solemn Meetings for this purpoſe follows naturally, and ſo doth the extream ſinfulneſs of cold Indifferency and Abſence from the Sacred Offices. And I have endeavoured to preſs home the conſequents upon the Hearts of the careleſs Chriſtians, and carried the point as far as the nature of the thing wou'd bear. And becauſe *Holineſs becomes God's Houſe, and our Feet are to be look'd to, when we come thither; that ſo Men may not offer the Sacrifice of Fools inſtead of Reaſonable Creatures, not conſidering that they do evil*, where they ſhou'd do the greateſt Good, I have made Publick mine own Private Obſervations upon the Duty of thoſe that draw near to God, whether it be in *Prayer*, *hearing* of God's Word, and *Receiving the Sacraments*. In all which I have conſidered our ſelves as ſinful condemn'd Men coming for Pardon before their Judge, attended with his dutiful Subjects, the ever Loyal Angels. I have added ſuch Directions, that I thought neceſſary for that End, together with ſuch Reflections I thought ſuitable to make Men better, and not worſe. Finally, I have treated on this whole Subject in the Stile, and after the manner of a *Member of the old Church of England* without warping to either ſide, without Cenſuring or Flattering thoſe that differ from us. And the Book is Calculated for, and directed to thoſe *Luke-warm*, *Prophane*, and *Negligent Perſons*, who have not yet forſaken her Communion. In ſhort, my deſign is to awaken Men out of their Lethargy and ſet them to work; that they may *make their Calling and Election ſure* in the due performance

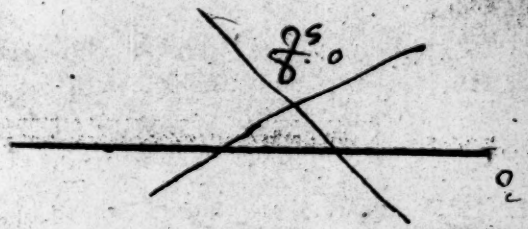
of

of the higheſt Duty of Religion, the *Publick Worſhip of God.*—— And now what remains but that every good Man wou'd endeavour likewiſe to reform the World in this particular, and join in Prayer to God to bleſs ſuch endeavours, and particularly thoſe of the *Author* in this Book. *Amen.*

FINIS.

A

DISCOURSE

OF

Primitive Baptiſm.